

©Copyright, 1975 International Publications Services

FROM SLAVERY TO NATIONHOOD

Written By: Carroll Brown

Adapted to new format: Jo Scales

A10-3Pe

CONTENTS

1. People in Slavery
2. A Leader Called
3. Let My People Go
4. Celebration of Freedom
5. God Creates a Covenant People
6. A Worshipping People
7. Unbelief Delays Fulfillment of Covenant
8. Claiming the Promised Land
9. Difficulty in Keeping the Covenant
10. Renewing the Covenant
11. Gideon: God's Courageous Man
12. Struggle Against Opposition
13. Give Us a King

CHAPTER ONE

PEOPLE IN SLAVERY

Aim: I will learn that the Hebrews spent a long time in slavery. I will learn, also, that I can be in slavery just as they were.

Background Scripture: Exodus 1; 2

Verses in Today's Lesson: Exodus 1:7-14; 2:11-15

Memory Verse

"Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord! Lord, hear my voice! Let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!" (Psalms 130:1-2).

On the small Island of Zanzibar there is a huge cave by the sea. More than a hundred years ago this cave was used to keep more than five hundred men and women that were to be sold in slavery. The people who were taken to the cave would never again have the right to make any decision. From their capture until their death they would not be able to have any control over any part of their lives.

Today the cave reminds us of how Africa once suffered from the evil practice of slavery. Slavery was a terrible thing. It separated children and parents. It took people away from their tribes. It forced people to work in bondage.

This lesson tells us how God helped the Hebrews that were in slavery. The Hebrews were God's chosen people. God wanted to bless the world through them.

CHANGE IN POLITICS

Read Exodus 1:7-14. At first, the Egyptians liked for the Hebrews to live in their country. The Pharaoh had invited the Hebrews to stay because of Joseph. Joseph himself, was a former slave. His jealous brothers had sold him to a caravan going to Egypt.

In Egypt, God blessed Joseph, and he became the Pharaoh's high government officer. Joseph had kept the Egyptians and Hebrews from starving during a great famine.

Then after many years of faithful service to the Pharaoh and to the country of Egypt, Joseph died. The Pharaoh whom Joseph had served so well died, too. A new king came into power. This was probably Rameses II. He did not know Joseph. (verse 8)

Often when there is a change in rulers, people who were once favoured lose their positions. This happened to the Hebrews. The new king saw there were many Hebrews, and he feared them. (verses 9-10) He feared they might join the enemy during time of war and defeat Egypt.

What did the Egyptians decide to do to the Hebrews?

THE HEBREWS BECAME SLAVES

Read Exodus 1:11-14. Pharaoh made slaves of the Hebrew people. He was a ruthless and ambitious leader. He demanded the labour of slaves to build his monuments and cities. The Egyptians made God's people work very hard. They built two cities, Pithom and Raamses. (verse 11)

The Egyptians kept trying to make the Hebrews work harder and harder. They thought that severe work would ruin the health of the Hebrews. They thought this would keep the Hebrew women from bearing so many children. But hard times did not destroy the Hebrews. They kept growing in number. The Egyptian plan had failed. So, Pharaoh made another plan to destroy the Hebrews.

Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill all the Hebrew boy babies as soon as they were born. The girl babies could live. But the midwives feared God and did not obey the Pharaoh. They told him the Hebrew women were vigorous and gave birth before the midwives could get there.

Pharaoh then ordered that all the baby boys be thrown into the Nile River. (verses 17-22) It was a sad time for the Hebrews.

A DELIVERER IS BORN

Chapter 2 tells how God defeated Pharaoh. God had a plan. Moses was a part of God's plan.

A Hebrew woman gave birth to a baby boy. For three months she hid him in her home from the Egyptians. After that she could not hide him safely at home. So she made a reed basket and laid the baby Moses in it. She put the basket in the tall reeds at the edge of the river. Miriam, Moses's sister, watched the basket.

One day the daughter of Pharaoh went to bathe at the river. She found the basket. She looked inside and when she saw the baby, she had compassion on him. Miriam asked if the princess would like a nurse for the baby. She then went and brought Moses' own mother. (verses 6-10)

Moses' mother took care of him, for the princess, until he was weaned. Then she took him to the palace. Moses went to the best schools in the land. He grew up in Pharaoh's house and was treated as an Egyptian prince. But, what happened when Moses was grown?

FROM PRINCE TO FUGITIVE

One day after Moses was a grown man, he saw an Egyptian hitting a Hebrew. The Hebrew died. Moses remembered that he, too, was a Hebrew. He could not forget his mother's training. Moses looked around to see who was watching him. When he saw no one, he killed

the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

The next day Moses saw two Hebrews fighting. He tried to stop the fight. The Hebrew asked Moses if he would kill him too. Moses became afraid. Everyone must know that he killed the Egyptian! Moses had done wrong and now he was frightened.

Pharaoh found out that Moses had killed one of his men. He was angry and ordered Moses to be killed. Moses fled from Pharaoh's wrath. He went to the land of Midian in the wilderness. Thus, a prince with all the advantages of his position, became a fugitive.

In a moment of human anger, he had identified himself with the Hebrews and killed an Egyptian.

Moses stayed in Midian for forty years. God was preparing him for future leadership.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

All people have hard times. God wants to give his people strength for hard times. God loves his people and hurts with them when they suffer.

When you have hard times, God cares. He will make a way out for you. He will answer your prayers like he answered the prayers of the Hebrews. Remember to ask God to lead you each day.

CHAPTER TWO

A LEADER CALLED

Aim: This lesson will help me understand what "God's call" means.

Background Scripture: Exodus 3;4

Verses in Today's Lesson: Exodus 3:1-12

Memory Verse

"Then the Lord said, 'I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings'" (Exodus 3:7).

Leaders are very important people. They help shape the fate of their countries. Good leaders try to do what is best for the whole country. But bad leaders often abuse and persecute their countrymen.

People need leaders. Chaos and confusion occur if people lack leadership. When the Hebrews lived in Egypt they had no leader because they were slaves. But, God knew they would need a leader after they were free. How did God get a leader for the Hebrews?

GOD SPEAKS TO MOSES

Read Exodus 3:1-12. Moses fled from Egypt because Pharaoh wanted to kill him. He went to Midian east of Egypt. Moses lived in Midian for forty years. He became a sheep herder of the Midian priest, Jethro. He married Zipporah, one of Jethro's daughters, and lived happily in Midian for forty years. Then one day, his peaceful shepherd's life came to an end. God spoke to Moses. He called him to be the leader of the Hebrew people.

God spoke to Moses through a burning bush. Moses saw the bush burning and burning, but it did not burn up. As Moses stopped to watch such an amazing event, God said, "Moses, Moses." (verse 4) Moses answered, "Yes, here I am." (Verse 4)

Moses was standing on holy ground, in the very presence of God himself. Out of respect and reverence for God, Moses took off his shoes. We, too, must stand in awe and bow in reverence before his presence.

Moses did not know God well. So God revealed himself to Moses. He was the God of Moses' ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then Moses realized who God was. He was afraid and hid his face. He was afraid to look at God. (verse 6)

God let Moses know that he cared for his people. God had a job for Moses to do.

GOD CARED FOR HIS PEOPLE

God told Moses that he knew the Hebrews were suffering and that he would rescue his people. (verses 7-8) He told Moses he would bring the Hebrews to a land ". . . flowing with milk and honey. . ."(verse 8).

This promised land was rich. It had plenty of food. Even though many other people lived in the promised land at the time, God wanted to make it the land of the Hebrews.

GOD GAVE MOSES A JOB TO DO

God said to Moses, "Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt" (verse 10).

Can you imagine Moses' reaction to that statement? Moses had fled from the Pharaoh because he wanted to kill him. Now God was wanting him to return to Egypt and to lead his people out of bondage.

Moses was very doubtful of his ability. In verse 11, Moses asked God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" How could a nobody lead God's people out of slavery? Moses probably felt that the Hebrews would not listen to him. He knew Pharaoh would not! But, surely God knew all about Moses and his limitations, yet God had said he wanted Moses to go to Egypt. God was not sending Moses by himself. God offered to help Moses.

GOD OFFERED TO HELP MOSES

God told Moses he would not be alone. God promised to bring the Hebrews out of Egypt unto "this mountain." This mountain was Mount Horeb or Mount Sinai. God spoke to Moses the first time on this mountain, and he later gave Moses the Law there.

It did not matter to God who Moses was. He did not care that Moses was an Israelite trained as an Egyptian. He did not care that he was a Midianite shepherd trained by a priest. Man emphasizes education and experience, but God only said, ". . . I will be with you. . ."(verse 12).

GOD CALLS PEOPLE TODAY

God knows about our sufferings and heartaches. He understands our problems. God does not forget his people. He will help us today as he helped the Hebrews.

God calls people in many ways. He might use a burning bush, a visitor, his Word, a gentle urging inside or other means. There is always an element of divine mystery involved in calling a leader. Yet, God uses ordinary people who respond to his call to do great things.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Is God calling you to do something? He has a job for you. And you can be assured of his presence and help when you do the job.

There is much suffering in today's world. If one listens to the radio, he hears about floods, famine, wrecks and other terrible things. A Christian should view these events as opportunities for helping people in need.

Let us look at people with "helping eyes." Let us ask God to make us see ways to help them. Pray that God will lead you into situations where you can help someone else.

Remember these things:

1. God always cares for his people. He sends people like Moses to help them.
2. God calls men to lead his people. Man is not worthy nor capable of doing the job alone.
3. God has promised to help us in every job he gives us to do. With God's help, we can succeed.

CHAPTER THREE

LET MY PEOPLE GO

Aim: This lesson teaches that the people of Israel obeyed God and God rewarded them. The Egyptians did not obey God and God punished them. This is a good lesson for me to learn.

Background Scriptures: Exodus 5-14

Verses in Today's Lesson: Exodus 5:1; 11:1-6; 13:17-22

Memory Verse

"And Moses said unto the people, 'Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today'" (Exodus 14:13).

For many years the people of Zimbabwe cried for political independence. At midnight on April 17, 1980, this became a reality. The British Union Jack flag was lowered and everyone shouted happily as the Zimbabwe flag was raised. Zimbabwe was free.

All men want to be free from oppression. But often the struggle for freedom is long and dangerous. The Hebrew liberation was not simple. In the last chapter we saw how God commissioned Moses for the liberation task. Moses made the perilous journey from Midian to Egypt. Aaron, Moses' brother went with him as the spokesman. When Moses arrived in Egypt he assembled the elders of Israel to present his credentials and plans.

PROVING HIS LEADERSHIP

It was not easy for Moses to convince the Israelites of his leadership. He was a stranger to them. Yet, he knew he needed the confidence of these slaves if he was to lead them to freedom. Oppressed people are suspicious of outsiders. Moses had to prove himself to them and persuade them to follow him. In Exodus 4:31, we learn that he succeeded for ". . . the people believed; and. . . they bowed their heads and worshipped." Pharaoh was Moses' next step.

MOSES CONFRONTS PHARAOH

Moses and Aaron went to see Pharaoh. They told him that God said, ". . . Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness" (Exodus 5:1).

Pharaoh asked Moses, ". . . Who is the Lord that I should heed his voice and let Israel go?. . ." (Exodus 5:2). Pharaoh became angry and told the soldiers to make the Hebrews work harder.

Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh again and told him that God said to let his people go. (Exodus 6:11) God said he would punish the Egyptians if Pharaoh refused to let the Hebrews go.

God punished the Egyptians by sending nine plagues on them. (Exodus 7:17-10:29) During each plague Pharaoh promised to set the Hebrews free. God stopped the plagues, but Pharaoh would not keep his promises.

THE PLAGUE OF DEATH

Read Exodus 11:1-6; 13:17-22. Moses told Pharaoh about the death plague, but Pharaoh would not let the Hebrews go. God told Moses how to save the Hebrews from death. Exodus 12 in your Bible tells about this. This was beginning of the Passover feast. It was the first of the great Jewish holy days.

Every Hebrew family must sacrifice a lamb and put the blood of the sacrificed lamb on the door post. The death angel would pass over the land and kill the firstborn in every home. But God would save the first born of every home where the blood was on the door post. The Hebrews put blood on the door posts. God saved their children and their flocks and herds just as he promised.

But death came to the Egyptian homes at midnight. The first-born of all Egyptian families was killed. Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron. He told them to get the Hebrews out of Egypt as fast as they could.

GOD LEADS THE HEBREWS OUT OF EGYPT

Exodus 13:17-22 tells how God led his people out of Egypt. The shortest way to the promised land was up the coast. The Philistines lived along the coast, and most people travelled that way.

The Hebrew people were not trained to fight. So God led them another way. God led about six hundred thousand men, plus women and children, through the wilderness. The Israelites had lived in Egypt for 430 years. God was ready for his people to go back to Canaan. So God led them ". . . by day in a pillar of cloud . . . and by night in a pillar of fire. . ." (Exodus 13:21).

Joseph had told the Israelites that they would leave Egypt. He asked them to take his bones back to his old home. (Genesis 50:24-25) Moses did as Joseph wanted.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

God always cares for his people. He wants men today to be free of sin's penalty. The Egyptians would not listen to God, and they suffered punishment. The Israelites obeyed God, and he delivered them from bondage. Jesus wants us to live lives of obedience, too.

Is there sin in your life? We sin many times almost without thinking about it. When we ask God for forgiveness, he immediately forgives us. But what about the persistent, besetting sin that we do every day? We know that it is wrong, but we keep on doing it. Perhaps we think nobody knows about it, so it is all right to do it. Or, maybe we think we are just too weak to overcome the sin.

Whatever the reason is, we keep doing the same sin over and over.

God punishes sin. Sin is disobedience, and God punishes it. Think about your life. How obedient are you?

CHAPTER FOUR

CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM

Aim: The Hebrews sang praises to God when he gave them victory over the Egyptians. I need to learn to praise him when I experience I victory in my life.

Background Scripture: Exodus 14-15

Verses in Today's Lesson: Exodus 14:21-25, 30-31; 15:1-3, 20-21

Memory Verse

"Who is like thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, majestic in holiness, terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?" (Exodus 15:11).

Each year African countries celebrate their independence on their respective days. At this celebration there is music, dancing and many speeches. It is a holiday of fun and celebration. God's people, also, had a special time for celebrating their freedom from Egypt. What happened to the Israelites after they marched out of Egypt?

EGYPTIANS COME AFTER THE HEBREWS

Read Exodus 14:1-20. As soon as the Hebrews started marching toward the wilderness, Pharaoh again changed his mind. He must have realized that he had lost his slaves. Who would do all the hard work? So he called his best soldiers to go after the Hebrews. They took their armour and chariots and caught up with the Hebrews at the Red Sea. The Hebrews were really afraid. They wished they were still in Egypt. (verses 10-12)

Moses had faith. He knew that God would not forsake them. God told Moses to tell his people to move forward. The Red Sea was in front of the Hebrews, and the Egyptian army was behind them! God promised Moses victory over the Egyptians. But how? Read Exodus 14:21-25, 30-31. What miracle did God do?

THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA

Notice that God did the miracle. The Hebrews were terrified and had no safe place to go. Then the wind came and the water was divided.

Walls of water protected the Hebrews as they walked across the Red Sea to safety. But, the Egyptians were still following them.

God told Moses what to do. When all the Hebrews were across the sea, Moses held out his hand. The waters came together. The Egyptians, men, horses and chariots sank into the water. They all died. The Lord was victorious over the Egyptians.

SALVATION AND SINGING

Read Exodus 14:30-31; 15:1-3, 20-21. The Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians. The Hebrews saw the dead Egyptians lying on the seashore. The victory gave them new faith in God. They had seen his great miracle.

They revered the Lord more and had more faith in Moses, God's leader. They no longer murmured and complained. The people responded to the saving miracle by breaking out into songs of thanksgiving and praise. Faith in God is a singing faith.

There are two victory hymns in chapter 15 of Exodus. The song of Moses is found in verses 1-3; and you can almost hear the Hebrews singing joyously, ". . . I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and the rider he has thrown into the sea" (verse 1).

In verse two they praised God in a beautiful way. The song of joy came from their hearts.

"The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name" (Exodus 15:2-3).

Miriam, Moses' sister, led the women in another victory hymn in verses 21-22. The women sang and danced in joyful thanksgiving. They praised God for saving them.

We worship because we feel a deep desire to give thanks to God. We are compelled to say thank you to God for life. Our worship is the acknowledgment of our dependence on God. St. Francis of Assisi knew the meaning of praise. He wrote, "All creatures of our God and King, lift up your voice and with us sing, alleluia!"

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Do we praise and thank God for the victories he gives us? Remember that God performed a miracle for the people of Israel. When Pharaoh's army began to chase them, God opened up the Red Sea and allowed his chosen people to walk across on dry land. Then when Pharaoh's army started across the sea, God allowed the water to return to its natural place, drowning the soldiers. Miriam led the women in a song of victory. In it she praised God for the victory he had give the Hebrews.

You may never be allowed to experience anything like the Israelites experienced, but every day you experience victory in various ways. Some of our victories may seem small. For sick people, just living through the day is a great victory for them. For a baby, the first step is a victory. For someone who quits smoking or drinking, every day he does not smoke or drink is a victory. For anyone it is a victory when we put a specific sin out of our lives.

We experience victory every day we live. We need to praise God for

every victory for it is he who has given them to us. Every victory is an occasion to praise God.

CHAPTER FIVE

GOD CREATES A COVENANT PEOPLE

Aim: This lesson will teach me how I can be in a covenant with God.

Background Scripture: Deuteronomy 10-12; Exodus 19-20

Verses in Today's Lesson: Exodus 19:2-9; Deuteronomy 11:8-9, 18-19

Memory Verse

"Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples; for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. . ." (Exodus 19:5-6).

Covenants are part of the daily routine of an African even to day. When a young man and young woman wish to be married, they enter into a covenant with each other and often with each other's family. Gifts, money and promises are often exchanged. The two people to be married and their families are entering into an agreement. Each side has conditions to meet in the agreement.

God made a contract or covenant with Israel. He had delivered the Hebrews from Egypt. They were no longer slaves. God gave them his laws including the Ten Commandments. He would be their God, and they would be his people. God wanted the Israelites to bring salvation to the world. How did this happen? Where?

A COVENANT IS MADE

Read Exodus 19:1-9. Israelites had finally reached Mount Sinai. Their trip from the Red Sea had not been easy. But, they had witnessed the power and concern of God for them. God had saved them from slavery, from death at the hands of the Egyptians and from drowning. Also, he had kept them from starving and thirsting in the wilderness.

The people gathered around Mount Sinai. Then Moses went up the mountain. God had a message for the people. He wanted to make a covenant with them. God gave the message to Moses to take to the people. God called on Israel to obey him. (verse 5) They were to keep the covenant and then they would be a special treasure to God. They would be a ". . . kingdom of priests. . . ." (verse 6) One of the duties of priests was to bring men into fellowship with God. Thus, the Israelites would have the responsibility of taking God's message to the world. God required his people to obey him. He expects us to obey him too. How did Israel respond to God?

ISRAEL'S RESPONSE TO GOD

Read Exodus 19:7-9 again. The people listened as Moses told them what God expected of them. God demanded that they obey him. They said, ". . . All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (verse 8).

They were all ready to enter into covenant. God had made the covenant, and made his terms. If the people would obey his laws, he would be their God. He would protect them and bring them into possession of the land of Canaan. History revealed that the Israelites were unable to keep their part of the commitment. God, however, kept his part of the contract.

The Israelites were perhaps like many of us today. They recognized the right way, and they were filled with a deep desire to do right. They made a covenant to worship only God, but they failed.

We recognize the right way through Christ today. But, do we often fail to walk the right path? Do we always obey God? Unfortunately we fail many times, but God wants to forgive us. He is waiting for us to turn to him.

BEGINNINGS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Ten Commandments and other covenant laws were given by God to the people. But, he made provisions for a continuing relationship with the Israelites. He instructed the Israelites to teach their children about him.

Read Deuteronomy 11:18-19. God initiated religious education. The people were to teach their children about God and his covenant laws. They were to use different methods to help them remember God's laws. God told the people to bind the laws on their hands, to wear them on their foreheads, and to speak often of them. God expected his people to be faithful and to obey him and teach their children to obey him too.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

God expects the same of us today that he expected of the Israelites. We have a new covenant with God. God has established his covenant with us through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20). Christ died for us. That was God's part of the new covenant. God demands us to commit our lives to him and obey him completely. We, like the Israelites should impress our children with the fact that their relationship to God is the most important thing in their lives.

We need to share our faith in Christ with our children. God's laws and love should be discussed often in natural conversation. Are we, as people of a "new covenant" keeping our part of that covenant?

The covenant relationship that each Christian has with God is the most precious thing in his life. Accepting Jesus as your Saviour is saying to God that you accept your part of the relationship in covenant. How well are you doing in fulfilling your part of the bargain?

CHAPTER SIX

A WORSHIPPING PEOPLE

Aim: This lesson will tell me what true worship is.

Background Scripture: Exodus 33:1-35; 29; 40

Verses in Today's Lesson: Exodus 33:9-16; 35:29

Memory Verse

"And he said, 'My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest'" (Exodus 33:14).

Man is a worshipping creature. He worships the God who made him or he makes a god to worship. Idols and images are the result of man's need to worship. The Israelites became impatient with Moses who stayed so long on the mountain, talking with God. They needed and wanted worship. So what did they do?

AN IDOLATROUS PEOPLE

Read Exodus 32:1. Moses was not there to lead the people in the worship of God. So, they decided to make their own gods like they had seen worshipped in Egypt. The people asked Aaron to make them a god. Aaron fashioned a golden calf out of the Israelites' jewelry. The Israelites worshipped the golden calf. The Israelites did this shortly after God had redeemed them out of Egypt.

Does this tell us anything about human nature? Do we, today, forget about what God has done for us and turn to things of our own choosing (money, work, education)?

Throughout its early history Israel was tempted and often yielded to worship other gods according to the practices around them. But, God continually remained faithful to his covenant and forgave Israel for her unfaithfulness.

GOD DWELT WITH ISRAEL

Read Exodus 33:9-16. One of the sacred symbols of God's abiding presence during the wilderness period was "the tent of meeting." This "tent of meeting" was a movable tent in which God "tabernacled" (dwelt). He dwelt there with his people during their wilderness wanderings. Moses met there with God. God manifested his glory in the tent from time to time.

Verse 7 states that the tent was away from the tents where the people lived. The Israelites felt God was so holy that people could not come near him. The pillar of cloud at the door of the tabernacle showed God's presence within. This same pillar of cloud had accompanied the Israelites from Egypt. It had enveloped the top of Mount Sinai when Moses had met with God. The pillar of cloud disappeared for a while when the people made a golden idol. The

people repented. And now the pillar of cloud was a sign that God was with his people again.

GOD'S PRESENCE LEADS TO WORSHIP

When the people recognized God's presence in the pillar of cloud, they fell down and worshipped. Worship means a meeting between God and man. It is a vital experience with God. The Israelites responded spontaneously in worship when they recognized God's presence. Moses spoke to God as a friend (verse 11). Moses was a representative of his people to God.

Today we can approach God directly through Christ. Every believer is a priest. We are priests before God and to one another. We are under obligation to function as priests on behalf of our fellowman. Christ, too, is our friend. John 15:15 states, "No longer do I call you servants . . . but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." One of life's mysteries is God's friendship and presence with common ordinary people such as we are.

GOD'S PROMISE TO MOSES

Moses knew the Israelites had sinned. He knew they had made a golden calf and worshipped it. Moses asked God to forgive them (Exodus 32:12). Moses knew he needed God's help. He asked God to show him his way. (Exodus 33:13)

God promised to be with the Israelites and to care for them. (Exodus 33:14) This promise of God is good for God's people even today. When we worship God, he speaks to us. He will guide us and care for us.

Moses received the Ten Commandments a second time. When Moses saw the Israelites worshipping the golden calf he became angry. He threw the stone tablets upon which the Ten commandments were written and broke them. (Exodus 32:19) Moses returned to Mount Sinai. Again God gave the Laws to Moses. God said again the people could have no other gods. All work must be done in six days. The seventh day was a day for worship and rest. Moses told the Israelites to make an offering to God. How willing were the Israelites to make an offering?

THE ISRAELITES WORSHIPPED WITH GIFTS

Read Exodus 35:29. Part of the Israelites' act of worship involved giving. Moses told the people to make an offering to God. A permanent tabernacle was to be built.

Moses gave detailed instructions for the presentation of gifts. (Exodus 35:4-29) They gave freely and as their hearts led them to give. They gave willingly. the response of the Israelites was so overwhelming that Moses had to call a halt to the bringing of gifts. When God's people give willingly, the needs of God's work

will be more than met.

Our feeling about giving is important. Someone has stated that there are three ways of giving: reluctant giving, duty giving and thanksgiving. Reluctant giving says, "I really don't want to give but I'm afraid not to." Duty giving says, "I ought to give because it is my duty." But, thanksgiving says, "I want to give." Thanksgiving is an open gate to God's love. We receive the greatest joy when we give because we love God. When we give gladly, we are worshipping God.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

All Christians need to worship. As you worship, expect to meet God. His presence can be experienced through many worship experiences praise, prayer, Bible reading, giving, sermon and others. What are the things which really help you to worship? Today, we worship God in spirit. Jesus said in John 4:24, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." What does this mean? Are you worshipping God in your spirit? In your actions?

CHAPTER SEVEN

UNBELIEF DELAYS FULFILLMENT OF COVENANT

Aim: This lesson will teach me understand that my part of the covenant calls for faith.

Background Scripture: Numbers 13-14

Verses in Today's Lesson: Numbers 13:30-33; 14:1-3, 8-10, 18-23

Memory Verse

"And the Lord said to Moses, 'How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs which I have wrought among them?'" (Numbers 14:11).

A father was playing with his little two-year-old son. He would put him on the table and then pick him up quickly. The child laughed. Then the father stood the child on the table and said, "Now, my son, jump! Father will catch you!" But the boy would not jump. He liked his father, but he did not believe his father would catch him. The father commanded him to jump, jump! Finally, the boy jumped and his father caught him. His disbelief caused him to delay obeying his father. But when he obeyed his father, and jumped, then his father fulfilled his promise. He caught him.

During his ministry Jesus said, ". . . 0 men of little faith. . . ." (Matthew 8:26) to his disciples many times. Despite the miracles and many deeds which the disciples witnessed, they often did not have enough faith. Can you remember some of these times? (Matthew 8:23-27; Matthew 14:15-20, 28-33)

We, also, fail at times because we do not have enough faith. When our faith is weak, we miss blessings that God wants to give us. The Israelites often lost their faith. Even though God had protected them and led them miraculously out of Egypt, they still strayed away from their faith at many times. Do you remember how they built a golden calf to worship? (Exodus 32) Today's lesson is about another time in the Hebrew history when they lost their faith. Out of all who left Egypt, only two of them went into the promised land of Canaan.

ARRIVAL AT THE PROMISED LAND

The Israelites had arrived at the Promised Land. God told them that he would give the land to them. The people were afraid. They wanted Moses to send people to spy out the land. The Lord spoke to Moses and let him send the spies. Moses sent a spy from each tribe.

The spies spent forty days in the Promised Land. They gathered fruit to take back to show the people. They said that many people lived in the land. What was the spies' report? What did Caleb and Joshua want to do?

REPORT OF THE SPIES

Read Numbers 13:30-33. The spies returned to make their reports. All agreed the land was good. There was fruit, abundant crops and water. The people lived in fortified cities and enjoyed a high standard of living.

But the spies were divided on what they should do. Joshua and Caleb felt that Israel could conquer the land. They knew God was able to help them. Caleb said, ". . . Let us go up at once and occupy it. . ." (verse 30).

The other ten spies started complaining. They said the people of the land were strong and many. The ten spies said the men were like giants. ". . . We seemed to ourselves as grasshoppers. . ." (verse 33).

Everything the spies said about the land and the people was true. But they forgot one thing. God was going to give them the land.

What made the difference in the report of the two men and the report of the ten men? Perhaps, Joshua and Caleb had a different spirit. They had faith rather than fear. Faith overcomes fear. Faith is taking God at his word.

Who did the Israelites believe? What did they do?

THE ISRAELITES COMPLAINED

Read Numbers 14:1-3. The Israelites believed the ten spies, not Joshua and Caleb. They became angry with Moses and Aaron. They wanted to go back to Egypt!

They thought they would die in this new land. They thought the giants would kill all their wives and children. They forgot how God protected and provided for them. They decided to appoint a leader to take them back to Egypt. (Numbers 14:4) They would rather be slaves in Egypt than free under God!

The Israelites did not have enough faith. God could not give them all the blessings he wanted for them: Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb tried to restore the faith of the people.

THE PEOPLE WOULD NOT FOLLOW MOSES

Read Numbers 14:8-10. The Israelites would not listen to Moses and the other leaders. They wanted to stone them. They did not believe that God would give them land.

This made God angry at the people. He told Moses he would kill the Israelites. Moses pleaded with God not to kill his people. Moses said the world would see God's power if he gave them the Promised Land.

Read the conversation between God and Moses in Numbers 14:18-23.

THE LORD HEARD AND FORGAVE

God heard the plea of Moses. He forgave the people because of Moses. Moses' prayer had great power with God. Our prayer for others can have power too.

God forgave Israel and did not destroy them. but God punished Israel because she did not have enough faith. Only two Israelites who came out of Egypt were allowed to enter the Promised Land. They were Joshua and Caleb. God made the Israelites wander in the wilderness for 40 years until all the unfaithful died.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

How strong is your faith? Do you think that God does not hear your prayers? Will you pray, asking God to forgive you and to help you to believe? When you do, you will find victory through God's power.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CLAIMING THE PROMISED LAND

Aim: This lesson tells me how God fulfilled his promise to the Hebrews. It will help reassure me that God will keep his promises to me.

Background Scripture: Joshua 3-6; 14:1-5

Verses in Today's Lesson: Joshua 4:4-7; 5:10-12; 6:1-5; 11:23

Memory Verse

". . . Be strong and of a good courage; be not frightened , neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

The desire to own and hold a plot of land is rooted deep in the heart of man. The struggle for land has caused wars and many arguments.

The Hebrews must have really yearned for a plot of land that was their own. They must have wanted to plant their crops and build their homes. For forty years they had wandered in a barren wilderness. God had provided manna as their daily food.

Now they were on the eastern banks of the Jordan river. They were just outside of the Promised Land. Moses had died. Joshua was their new leader. The people were confident of God's leadership.

GOD'S ASSURANCE OF HIS PRESENCE

The Jordan River was swollen with rain water. In the dry season, the Israelites might have waded across. But, at this time of the year they could not even swim in the raging waters. Joshua 3 tells us that another miracle occurred as the priests stepped into the water carrying the ark. Remember that the ark was the place the Hebrews felt that God lived. It was a very holy object. When the priests stepped into the river carrying this most precious ark (which represented God's presence) with them, the waters were dammed up and the people hurried across on dry land. (Joshua 3:14-4:1)

This was a thrilling experience for the Hebrews. The ark which symbolized God's presence was going before them into the new land.

Success was assured. How did they respond to this event?

THE ISRAELITES BUILT A MEMORIAL ALTAR

Read Joshua 4:4-7. Joshua chose a man from each tribe. Each man gathered a stone from the Jordan river bed. They built an altar of stones. The altar was a reminder of what had happened. Joshua told the people to tell their children about what had happened that day.

God told the people to observe the rites and feasts again. The passover was an observance or remembrance which reminded the Hebrews of God's deliverance from Egypt. Read Joshua 5:10-12 to see how the Israelites celebrated the passover.

THE ISRAELITES TAKE JERICO

Jericho was one of the strongest Canaanite cities. It was surrounded by a huge wall. How could the Israelites take over such a protected city? Read Joshua 6:1-5.

God told Joshua how to conquer Jericho. The Israelites marched around Jericho for seven days. On the seventh day they marched around the city seven times. This seemed like a very strange way to fight a battle and conquer a city. But this was the way God used to show his power both to the Jericho dwellers and to the Israelites.

When the Israelites marched around the city seven times on the seventh day, seven priests blew the trumpets, and the wall surrounding the mighty city fell down. How shocked the people inside Jericho must have been! The Israelites took Jericho because they obeyed God's command. The victory belonged to God, not to the Israelites. The Israelites were simply obeying God's instructions.

BUILDING A NATION

God continued to be with the Israelites. God led them to take over the whole land. Read Joshua 11:23. God had given them the victory.

Finally, the battles were over. God had kept his promise and given his people the Promised Land. God keeps his promises.

Joshua had the hard work of building a nation. He divided the land between the twelve tribes. Throughout his life, Joshua worked hard to keep the Israelites faithful to God.

THE PASSOVER AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is much like the Jewish Passover Feast. Jesus and his disciples had gathered to celebrate the Passover when it became apparent that they were about to eat their last meal together.

Christ died on the cross for our sins. The Lord's Supper reminds us of what Christ did. The Passover reminded the Israelites of what God did for them in Egypt. The next time you participate in the Lord's Supper, remember what Christ did for you.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

The Israelites found that God fulfilled his promises to them. God never failed. Every promise he made was fulfilled just as he said. God is faithful to do just as he has promised his people.

God has promised us many things. He has promised to be with us

until the end of time. He has promised to forgive our sins if we ask him to do so. He has promised to care for us. He has promised to give us the things we ask for in his name. He has promised to save all those who call upon his name. He has promised to wipe away our tears.

We can be sure that God will fulfil every promise he has made to us, even if it requires that he break down walls to do so.

CHAPTER NINE

DIFFICULTY IN KEEPING THE COVENANT

Aim: I will study to see if there are any false gods in my life.

Background Scripture: Judges 1-3

Verses in Today's Lesson: Judges 2:11-23

Memory Verse

"And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, forgetting the Lord their God. . ." (Judges 3:7).

When Ruth was a small child, she liked to run in the church. Her feet made such loud noise as she ran! Her mother did not like for Ruth to do this. So one Sunday evening, her mother said, "Now promise me you will not run in the church any more. God does not like for children to do this because it does not show respect for God's house, the church."

Ruth promised very faithfully not to run in the church. But after the church service was over she forgot her promise! She began running and slipped and fell! She hit my head and fell unconscious! When she woke up, she saw her mother. She remembered her broken promise, and she never ran in church again. It is very easy to break promises.

When we accept Jesus into our lives, we promise him we will live for him. We invite him into our lives. Accepting Jesus is a personal matter. No one else can accept Jesus for us. We must do this ourselves. Not even our parents can believe for us.

THE ISRAELITES AT HOME

The Israelites lived in Canaan now. They did not wander as their fathers had. They settled in one place and became farmers. They began living like the people around them. Many worshipped false gods. The people began mixing the worship of God with idol worship.

The Israelites forgot the God of their parents. They forgot that God had delivered their parents from Egyptian bondage. They forgot that God had given them the Promised Land.

What happened to the Israelites' relationship to God? Who did they worship? How did God feel about their lack of faith?

THE ISRAELITES WORSHIPPED FALSE GODS

Read Judges 2:13-23. The Israelites turned away from God. They worshipped two of the Canaanite gods called Baal and Asheroth. Baal meant "Lord of the land." The Canaanites thought Baal gave them good harvests. Baal was male, and Asheroth was female. They believed the gods had sex. The Canaanites practised immoral sex

acts as part of their Baal worship.

The Israelites would worship Baal when they had good rain and got good crops. The Israelites' faith in God grew weaker and weaker. Their moral character became worse and worse. They followed false gods.

GOD BECAME ANGRY WITH THE ISRAELITES

God is holy. He, therefore, cannot tolerate sin. He knows when people sin. God became angry with his people.

The Israelites left God. God also left them. Enemies began to defeat them. They were losing the Promised Land that God gave them. (verse 15) God was angry, but he always wants to save people. Read verse 17 to learn of God's plan.

GOD RAISED UP JUDGES

Read Judges 2:17. God judged the people for their sin. He gave the Israelites judges. The men were soldiers. They led the Israelites back to victory. They led the government.

The judges guided the people. The Israelites followed them for a while. But they "turned quickly" (verse 17) back to false gods. Each generation grew more and more sinful. (verse 19)

God became angry. He told the people he would not help the Israelites get rid of their enemies. The people were not truly repentant.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

We do not have gods like Baal or Asheroth. But if we put anything in place of God, that thing is a god to us. Money, alcohol, pleasure and business can be gods. When we serve false gods like these, we always lose. We miss out on the blessings God wants to give us. Sin destroys us. We must put God first in our lives.

Think of false gods in our world. Are you guilty of serving a false god? When things become so important that nothing else matters, then that thing is a god. God can help you put false gods out of your life.

CHAPTER TEN

RENEWING THE COVENANT

Aim: This lesson will cause me to think about whether I need to renew my covenant with God.

Background Scripture: Deuteronomy 26; Joshua 24

Verses in Today's Lesson: Joshua 24:14-15,19-28

Memory Verse

"And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

In the last lesson we studied about the difficulty the Israelites had in keeping their covenant with God. The Israelites yielded to the temptation to worship other gods. God continually tried to call them back to him. Today's lesson tells how God used a man to renew the covenant. He used Joshua to call the people back to him.

AN UNDECIDED PEOPLE

The Israelites would serve God for a while and then turn away. Joshua tried to call the people back to God. He was a very old man. Joshua reminded the people of God's blessing to them.

In Joshua 24:1-13, we find the story of how God had led and blessed the Israelites. Then he called for the people to repent and make a new commitment to the one true God.

JOSHUA CALLED FOR A NEW COMMITMENT

Read Joshua 24:14-15, 19-28. Joshua said the Israelites were to ". . . fear the Lord. . ." (verse 14). He did not mean for them to be afraid. He meant for them to revere God. They should realize God's power and might. Joshua knew that some Israelites worshipped other gods. He told them to ". . . put away. . ." (verse 14) these false gods. God will not share us with other gods.

Joshua called on the people to decide. ". . . Choose this day whom you will serve. . ." (verse 15). They could choose false gods or they could choose God. They could not worship both.

We do not have false gods like Baal. Many "gods," however, keep us from serving God. Some people make a god of pleasure or work or other things.

Joshua set the example for the Israelites to follow. He said, ". . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Verse 15).

When a leader takes a stand for right, most of the people will follow. We need leaders like Joshua. We need leaders who will call us back to God.

THE ISRAELITES COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO GOD

The people of God said they would follow Joshua's example. They promised to serve God. They promised to put all false gods out of their lives. They recalled all the wonderful blessings God gave them.

We need to renew our commitment to God many times. We need revival like the Israelites. We forget that we need God. Many times we need revival in our lives. We need revival when we stop praying and reading God's Word. We need revival when worship of God is not important to us. The Israelites made their new covenant at Shechem.

THE PEOPLE MADE A COVENANT AT SHECHEM

The people promised to serve God. Joshua told them they would find it hard. (verse 19) The people promised to stay faithful to God.

Joshua wrote the covenant. It was almost like a treaty between two nations. Joshua told the people God would punish them if they were not faithful to him. All other gods must be put away.

A great stone placed at Shechem reminded the people of the covenant with God. Shechem was an important place. God promised the Promised Land to Abraham at Shechem. Joseph's body was buried there. Now God made a new covenant there with Israel. The great stone would remind the people of the covenant. It would call them to be faithful to the God of their fathers.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

The lesson of renewal, or revival, is a timeless one for all generations. Do you ever pause in your daily life and recommit your life to God? Do you ever, like the apostle Paul, feel like saying, "I do not do the good I want to do; instead, I do the evil that I do not want to do?"

We need to be reminded of our responsibility to God. We need to make a new commitment to serve him.

Think about your own life. Does sin keep you from serving God? Do you need to renew your commitment to God? Ask God to help you in your daily service to him.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

GIDEON: GOD'S COURAGEOUS MAN

Aim: This lesson will teach me that Gideon was a courageous man. It will challenge me to be courageous, too.

Background Scripture: Judges 6-8

Verses in Today's Lesson: Judges 7:2-8, 20-21

Memory Verse

"Gideon said to them, 'I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you'" (Judges 8:23).

In Africa certain tribes have rites that are used to prove manhood. Formerly, the Maasai tribe had to kill a lion to prove that they were ready for manhood. These rites measured a person's courage.

Our lesson today is about one of Israel's judges. His name was Gideon. He was known for his courage. God spoke to Gideon and called him to lead the Israelites. Read how Gideon courageously spoke out for God and entered true manhood.

Read Judges 6:11-24.

GOD GAVE THE ISRAELITES A LEADER

An angel spoke to Gideon. God called Gideon to lead the people to fight Midian. God told Gideon to destroy the altar to Baal built by Gideon's father.

The people became angry. They wanted to kill Gideon because he destroyed the altar. Joash, Gideon's father, defended Gideon.

Gideon wanted to know that God would be with him if he fought Midian. He asked God for a sign.

GOD CHOSE AN ARMY

Read Judges 7:2-8, 20-21. Gideon called the people to battle. (Judges 6:34) Thirty-two thousand men answered Gideon's call. (Judges 7:3) What did Gideon do to get the men ready for battle?

God told Gideon that he had too many soldiers! The Israelites would think they had won the battle because they had such a large army! So God told Gideon to send home all who were afraid! When he followed God's plan, he had only three hundred soldiers left!

Sometimes we think that strength is in numbers. Thus we may think a "great church" means a church with many members. The Bible does not agree with that statement. ". . . Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts" (Zachariah 4:6).

God wanted the Israelites to know that he gave victory to them. When we reach a goal or win a victory, God helps us. We do not win by our own power.

Gideon got the army ready for battle with God's help.

GOD GAVE THE VICTORY

Read Judges 7:20-21. Gideon's army of three hundred surrounded the Midianite camp. Their only weapons were clay pots and trumpets. (verse 20) The Hebrew soldiers fought by holding burning torches, blowing trumpets and breaking clay pots! The Midianites were frightened, and they ran away! They did not try to defend the city. They ran away!

God can do all things. The Israelites won a victory without weapons. The Midianite army was much larger than Israel's, but God gave Israel the victory. The victory cannot be explained, except to say it was from God's power.

The people were happy. (Judges 8) What did they want to do?

GIDEON WOULD NOT BE KING

The Israelites wanted to make Gideon their king. Gideon said no. Read the Memory Verse again. Gideon said that neither he nor his sons would become king. God was the only king that Israel needed.

Gideon asked the people to bring gold to make an ephod. An ephod was a sacrificial robe. Gideon built the ephod to remind the people of the victory God gave them. But it soon became an idol. The people forgot God and began worshipping the ephod. (Judges 8:27)

Gideon was a great leader. The influence he had, however, was not lasting on the Israelites. When Gideon died, the people turned back to Baal. (Judges 8:33)

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Are you a modern day Gideon showing courage in your faith? God will give us courage to do his work. Ask God to help you have more courage to speak out for him.

Perhaps God wants you to speak to a fellow worker about Jesus. You might have delayed doing this for a long while because you are afraid. God will give you the courage to speak out for Jesus.

Maybe you feel that you would like to teach a Bible class, but you are afraid to try. Forget your fear. Ask God to give you the courage to announce that you will start a Bible class.

It might be that you would like to sing in a choir. You have not done anything about it because you are afraid. Ask God to forgive you for your fear, and go ahead and join the choir.

God is not the author of fear. The Bible makes that clear. Dare to be courageous like Gideon was when he led an army to victory for God.

CHAPTER TWELVE

STRUGGLE AGAINST OPPOSITION

Aim: I will learn in this lesson how Samson lost his great strength. Perhaps it will help me understand how God works in a person's life.

Background Scripture: Judges 13-16

Verses in Today's Lesson: Judges 13:1; 16:23-30

Memory Verse

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalms 27:1).

Several years ago Filbert Bayi, a Tanzanian, accomplished a great physical achievement. He was a runner who had practised very, very hard. He knew how to run. He practised and trained until his body was in top physical condition. Then, he broke the 1,500 metres world record for running.

This lesson is about a man who also had great physical strength. His name is Samson. The story of Samson is in Judges, chapters 13-16.

THE BIRTH OF SAMSON

Manoah and his wife had no children. One day an angel came with a message from God. God would give them a son. Read Judges 13:1; 16:23-30.

Manoah and his wife wanted the child very much. The angel told them their child would be different. He was to be a Nazarite. A Nazarite was a person set apart and dedicated to God. He took the Nazarite vow. (Numbers 6) A Nazarite could not drink wine or strong drink. He could not eat grapes or raisins. He could not cut his hair. A Nazarite was not to touch anything dead.

Manoah and his wife prayed that God would make them wise parents. (13:8) Samson grew quickly. He grew to be a man. God's Spirit was on Samson. (Judges 13:24-25) God gave Samson great strength.

THE LIFE OF SAMSON

God chose Samson to be a judge of Israel. He was a military leader. Samson was supposed to defeat the Philistines. They ruled over Israel for forty years. (13:1)

Samson did not follow God. He depended on his own strength. He broke his Nazarite vows. He lived a very sinful life. He married a Philistine woman.

Samson's father-in-law gave his daughter, Samson's wife, to Samson's friend. Samson became very angry. He tied together three hundred foxes by two's. He put a fire brand (piece of burning wood) between the two tails. Then he turned the foxes into the cornfields of the Philistines. The fields were burned up. (Judges 15:4-5)

The Philistines became very angry. They wanted to hurt Samson. They killed his unfaithful wife and her father. (15:6)

Samson kept on living a sinful life. He used his power to destroy many Philistines. He killed a thousand men with the jawbone of a donkey. (15:15-16)

SAMSON MET DELILAH

Samson met a beautiful, Philistine woman named Delilah. The Philistines paid her to find out about Samson's strength. Three times Samson lied to her. The Philistines waited. They wanted to destroy Samson. Then Delilah used an old trick on Samson.

Delilah told Samson he did not love her. If he loved her, he would tell her what made him so strong. Delilah used her beauty and sex to do what the Philistine army could not do. She used "love" to trick Samson. Samson told her that he was a Nazarite. His hair had not been cut before then. She called the Philistine army. When Samson went to sleep, Delilah had a man cut his hair.

Samson's strength was not in his hair. But his long hair was his last unbroken vow to God. When his hair was cut, the last tie between Samson and God was cut. One of the saddest verses in the Bible is Judges 16:20, ". . . And he did not know that the Lord had left him." It is always very sad when God leaves a person alone. Sin and disobedience causes this.

THE DEATH OF SAMSON

Read Judges 16:23-30. The Philistines celebrated their victory over Samson. They made a great sacrifice to Dagon, their god. Now the battle was not between Samson and the Philistines. It was between Dagon and God. The Philistines claimed victory for Dagon. They put out Samson's eyes so he could not see.

They brought Samson out to make fun of him. (verse 26) Samson prayed for God to give back to him his strength. God gave Samson enough strength to pull down the pillars of the building. Three thousand Philistines died, and Samson died too.

Samson can teach us important lessons. God gives us strength and power to serve him. But sin separates man from God. Samson lost his power when he sinned. Prayer is the way man talks to God. God answered Samson's prayer and gave back his strength.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

Sin and broken vows destroyed Samson's power. Look at your life. Does sin keep God's power out of your life? God can help you overcome sin and live a powerful life. This is one of the ways God works through our lives. We sometimes prevent him doing what he would like to do because we keep sin in our lives. The sin prevents the power coming through.

Why not confess your sins to God and seek his forgiveness? Promise to use your life serving him.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

GIVE US A KING

Aim: This lesson teaches me about Samuel who lived an obedient life. It will challenge me to obey God, too.

Background Scripture: Judges 21:25; 1 Samuel 8-10

Verses in Today's Lesson: 1 Samuel 8:1-9; 10:1

Memory Verse

"The people of Israel said to Samuel, 'Do not cease to cry to the Lord our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines'" (1 Samuel 7:8).

Many African countries have decided not to have a king. Perhaps kingship reminds them of total authority and lack of freedom.

The Israelites, however, continued to want a king. Do you remember the Israelites wanted Gideon to be their king, but he refused. He knew God was their king. He knew what the people would have to do if they had a king.

As the tribes of Israel grew into a nation, they needed leaders. Each tribe ruled itself. God called judges to rule the tribes as needs arose.

GOD CALLED A NEW LEADER

In 1 Samuel 1:1 to 4:21 we read of Samuel's early life. His parents gave him to God. When he was a small boy they took him to the tabernacle to live with Eli, the priest. He slept each night near the ark of the covenant. (The ark symbolized the presence of God.)

One night, Samuel heard a voice calling his name. God told him that Eli's sons would be judged for their sins. Eli realized that God was calling Samuel to serve him. He taught Samuel to be a priest.

God called Samuel to be a prophet. A prophet gave God's message to the people. He also spoke to God for the people. (1 Samuel 3:20-21)

The Philistines ruled over the Israelites at this time. They defeated Israel in a great battle, killing four thousand men. Then they stole the ark of the covenant. The great priest, Eli, died when he heard the ark had been stolen. (1 Samuel 4:17-18)

Samuel became the new leader of Israel. He knew that Israel must be freed from the Philistines. Only God could set them free. He told them to quit worshipping Baal and Asheroth and be loyal to God. He told the Israelites that God would give them freedom and victory. But God demanded that they be faithful to him.

Samuel led Israel many years. Then he grew old. A leader had to be

named to take his place.

SAMUEL CHOSE HIS SONS

Read 1 Samuel 8:1-9; 10:1. Verse 1 says that Samuel "made" his sons to be judges. God did not choose them.

Samuel's sons were not like their father. They did not obey God. They were evil. Joel and Abijah tried to use their office as judge to get rich. They accepted bribes and charged people for judging in favour of them.

The people of Israel were upset. The elders went to Samuel. They knew Samuel would treat them fairly.

THE ELDERS WANTED A KING

The elders gave two reasons for wanting a king. They said Samuel's sons were evil and all other nations had kings.

Samuel did not want a king. He knew God was the King of Israel. God wanted to use prophets, priests and judges to lead them. The people of Israel were not faithful to God. Samuel was not pleased with the Israelites.

God spoke to Samuel. (1 Samuel 8:7-8) He told him the people did not reject him. They rejected God. They wanted to be like other nations.

God told Samuel to let Israel have a king. Samuel warned the people that the king would make them serve him. Their sons would be his soldiers. They would have to give their money to pay for the government.

SAUL WAS CHOSEN AS KING

God led Samuel to choose Saul as king. (1 Samuel 9) God brought Saul and Samuel together. Samuel anointed Saul as king. (1 Samuel 10:1) "Anoint" means he was set aside for a place and a task. God blessed Saul. Samuel told Saul he was to do God's will.

At first, Saul was able to defeat Israel's enemies. (1 Samuel 13-14). But Saul soon forgot his need of God.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME

God does not force anyone to obey him. We are free to choose what we will do with our lives. If we do not obey God, we will suffer. The Israelites always suffered when they did not obey God. Real freedom comes to one who serves God.

"Everyone else is doing it" is an attitude we find often today. Just because everyone else is doing something does not make it right. Israel wanted a king because other nations had kings. Many

times "following the crowd" is wrong. Sometimes it is right. A Christian must obey God. If the crowd is following God and obeying God, then it is right to follow them.

As we have studied the history of the Hebrew nation, we have learned of their broken promises. We have learned of the responsibilities we have as people of God. We should seek Christian leaders who obey Christ. We must pray for the leaders of our government, for we have learned that poor leaders always bring a nation to ruin. Let us pray for our leaders to be filled with God's wisdom and knowledge.

God wants to rule and guide in all of your life. He is your King.