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AT103T

FROM SLAVERY TO NATIONHOOD

(TEACHER)

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CHAPTER ONE

PEOPLE IN SLAVERY

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).

Teaching Aim: I want my students to understand that they can be in bondage just as the Hebrew people were.

Teaching Aids: Write on the chalk board or on a large paper this question: "What is slavery?" Be sure to leave space to write the students' answers.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Exodus 1:1-22 sets the stage for the rest of the book. We will consider the first seven verses now.

The purpose of these seven verses is to show that God is a God who saves. He saved the descendants of Jacob and brought them into a safe place in Egypt. (Remember how Joseph had gone there as a slave, but how he became a trusted government official. Remember, too, how his brothers followed him into Egypt to save the family from death by famine. Finally the family of Jacob came into the land to live until the famine was over. They found the place to be good and stayed there.)

The names here are in the same order as the list in Genesis 35:23-26. Its purpose is to show that the sons of Jacob, who were in the genealogical line of the chosen people, were the family of Moses.

Verse 5 tells us that the offspring of Jacob were seventy persons. Note this again in Genesis 46:8-27 and Deuteronomy 10:22. In Acts 7:14 the number is given as seventy five which probably includes the names of two sons and a grandson of Ephraim and a son and grandson of Manasseh, Joseph's children.

Exodus 1:8-22 tells of three attempts to destroy Israel's descendants in Egypt. The first attempt was in verses 8 through 14 and tells us that the new Pharaoh, who did not know Joseph, tried to destroy the Hebrew people by literally working them to death. He thought the hard work would keep their thoughts from any military planning. He feared they might plan to overpower the Egyptians since they were living in Goshen which was near the military routes in the northwest.

The Pharaoh who "did not know Joseph" was probably Seti I. He was the Pharaoh of the oppression. Then his son Raamses II was probably the Pharaoh of Exodus. In Exodus 2:23 we read that Seti I died.

The cities of Pithom and Raamses were store cities for military goods. Raamses II had his capital at Raamses during his talks with Moses.

The second attempt to destroy the Hebrews is recorded in Exodus 1:15-21. The Pharaoh told the midwives to destroy all the boy babies. These midwives were Hebrews themselves, and they were unwilling to carry out this order. Instead they lied to the authorities and said that the Hebrew women were too quick to give birth. The babies were already born and hidden before the midwives could get there.

The birthstool was probably the stone upon which all women of the ancient world sat during their labour and delivery.

Verse 18 tells that the Pharaoh was displeased because the Hebrews refused to destroy themselves. So he decided to destroy them by means outside the tribe. Anyone who saw a newborn baby boy was to throw him into the Nile River.

Chapter 2 is a report of how God continued to preserve his people by raising up a leader. The first ten verses tell the well-known story of how Moses' mother, his sister and the daughter of Pharaoh were used to preserve the tiny baby.

Of special note in these verses is that Moses came from the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe. Also note that the bulrushes are simply papyrus which is seen in many parts of the continent of Africa.

Verses 11 through 15a is the story of how Moses killed an Egyptian. He was probably out for a walk when he saw the Egyptian beating the Hebrew. He quickly went to the aid of the Hebrew and ended by killing the Egyptian. Note that Moses was a very human person when he was shaken with fear, and he ran away.

Verses 15a through 22 is the history of Moses' flight to Midian. There he lived for forty years taking care of the sheep of his father-in-law, Reuel. (At other places he is called Hobab and in still others Jethro.)

Verses 23-25 tell us that in their exile and slavery the Hebrews called out to God. God heard them, remembered the covenant and saw them in their pitiful condition. He knew what they were going through.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

After you have greeted each member, show the question you have written, "What is slavery?"

Ask: "Just what is slavery? Who can tell us what it means to be a slave?" Allow the students time to talk about this. Let them discuss it among themselves. They may want to name some examples of slavery, too, such as being a slave to alcohol or to cigarettes or to the lusts of the body. When they are ready, ask one to come to the front and write a definition of slavery on the board (or on the paper.) Make sure that you all agree with the definition.

Say: "The children of Israel found themselves in very big trouble. They found themselves in slavery. Let us study what happened to these people."

Interpretation

Say: "Our lesson tells us that the Hebrews were down in the land of Egypt. Who can tell us how they got down there?" Allow one or more to tell how Joseph was sold to a merchant from Egypt, and how his brothers came to Egypt in search of food. Help them tell a complete story.

Say: "Once they got into the land they settled in the northeastern part which had been given to Joseph for his family. It was a lovely, good land, and the people prospered. Their land produced good crops and their flocks and herds were fat and healthy. But one day the king of Egypt became worried because the Hebrews were so numerous. He decided to get rid of them or lessen their power. Let us read what happened."

Have one student read Exodus 1:7-14 while the others follow his reading in their own Bibles.

Say: "The Pharaoh had decided to make slaves of the people. What kind of work were they to do?"

After this question, ask the following questions allowing the students to discuss the answers.

"What did they build?"

"How did they do?"

"Was the Pharaoh pleased with their work?"

Say: "The pharaoh was afraid of the Israelites. He was afraid they might agree with some enemy power to overcome the Egyptians and rule the country themselves. His fear made him treat the Hebrews not as honoured guests as they had been treated, but as slaves. The next verses tell us that when the hard slavery did not accomplish his purpose, he decided to kill all the boy babies when they were born. This did not work either, so he told the Egyptians they were to throw every boy baby from the Hebrew nation into the Nile River.

"This was a man who was very afraid indeed. Only such a man would make war upon babies."

Continue: "But God had a plan for his people. When they cried out to him, he began to get his leader ready. Let its read Exodus 2:11-15."

Ask: "Who was Moses?" Let the students refer to the first ten verses of chapter 2 if they have trouble remembering the story of the baby, Moses. Add to the report so that the students have a clear picture what happened.

Say: "One day Moses was out for a walk. What happened?" Let the students tell the story in their own words.

Say: "Now it became necessary for Moses to live away from Egypt. The rest of this chapter, though, tells us that he found a safe place to live in the country of Midian. He would be there forty years before God called him to service."

Application To Our Lives

Ask: "What did we say slavery is?" Have a student read what was written upon the chalk board or the paper.

Say: "Slavery is a terrible thing for the slave. He has no way out of his dilemma. There are a number of things in our lives that we can be slaves to. We can be slaves to our jobs or our families or to education or to a social position. But the worst thing we can be a slave to is sin in any of its disguises. We need to think about our lives right now. Is there anything in our lives that is a sin that we are slaves to? It may be that we cannot tame our physical lusts. It may be that we cannot keep from gossiping. We may be unable to stop lying. We may be very judgmental of others around us.

"Let us bow our heads right now and silently pray. Let us ask God to show us anything in our lives that is a sin that we are slaves to. Ask him to forgive us for those sins and help us be a slave only to God."

Close the prayer time with a few sentences of audible prayer asking God to deliver us from our sins and to strengthen us in our commitment to him.

CHAPTER TWO

A LEADER CALLED

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).

Teaching Aim: I will help my students understand that God may be calling them to ministry through understanding Moses' call to ministry.

Teaching Aids: If you can find a picture of Moses and the burning bush, use it when you teach. If you cannot find a picture, draw a simple picture of a bush that is burning. This will help the students to visualize what Moses saw and how difficult it was for Moses to understand.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In the last lesson we saw that God had a plan for his people. They were in great trouble. God saw the trouble, he heard their call to him, he knew the problem and he remembered his promises to them. God began to put his plan into motion to help his people. This shows God's great faithfulness to his chosen people.

Exodus three and four tell us of God's call to Moses, Moses' resistance to the call, Moses' final obedience to the call and Moses' and Aaron's first encounter with the Hebrews in Egypt. We will pay special attention to Exodus 3:1-12.

Moses was content in the desert place where he was living and caring for sheep. He had lived there for forty years and probably had forgotten much of his life in the court of the Egyptian royalty. He had probably led his flocks to the western section of the wilderness in search of good grazing land. In his following of the sheep he came to Horeb which was known as the mountain of God. Horeb is another name for Sinai. This is the mountain where Moses would later receive the Ten Commandments from God.

Moses noticed a bush that was burning. The burning continued without any seeming damage to the bush. Moses stared at the miracle. "The angel of God" here is God himself. God is able to appear in any form that he chooses. Here he is as a flame of fire. The word Lord probably stands for Yahweh which is Hebrew for Adonai which means Lord. Moses was in the presence of the living God.

In verse 3, we see that Moses did not run away. He was curious. He went toward the bush to see just what was going on. When he started toward the bush, God spoke to him, calling his name. It is an amazing fact that God in all his glory, power and might knows every one of us by name. Moses realized that he was in the presence of a mighty power when he was told to remove his shoes.

God identified himself to Moses (in verse 6) as the God of the people in Moses' family. By this he is proving his faithfulness to all of them in the past and to Moses in the present time.

Then God began to tell Moses about all the trouble that the Hebrew people were in down in Egypt. He told him that he had heard the cry of the people. He said "I have come down." There may not be any more wonderful words written anywhere. God came down out of his beautiful, wonderful heaven to help his pitiful people. That is blessed assurance to us that he cares for us, too.

Then God told Moses that he wanted him to lead the people out of their bondage. Immediately Moses questioned God. He wanted to know if God had thought the whole thing through. He wanted to know if God really thought he had even a small chance of bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt.

Then God assured Moses of his presence with him. And he promised him that he would come back to the very mountain where they were standing.

Go ahead now and read all of Exodus 3 and 4 to get a whole picture of this place in Christian history.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "The Apostle Peter was fishing one day when Jesus came by and called him to follow him. He told his disciples they would be fishers of men."

"Matthew was sitting at a revenue table collecting taxes when Jesus happened to walk by. 'Follow me,' said Jesus, and Matthew did.

"Saul was travelling to Damascus when Jesus knocked him on his face in the road. He blinded him, then he told him he wanted him to serve him.

"A young man was sitting on his bed one evening when he felt a sudden urgency to tell the people in Asia about Jesus. He was living in England and could not believe that God really wanted him to go to Asia.

"A young woman stood to sing a song about the fields that belonged to God. They had no workers, but many sat at his table, eating of all the good things of life. She began to cry and could not finish

the song. God called her to Christian ministry.

"A woman was a bank teller. She loved her work. One day she heard the pastor ask for people to come forward and give themselves to teach the Bible. Suddenly the woman knew that was a call from God, and she stumbled forward to answer the call.

"God calls in many ways. We will study today to find out how he called Moses to service."

Interpretation

Tell your students to open their Bibles to Exodus 3:1-12. Tell one to read all these verses while the others follow his reading in their own Bibles.

Let a student tell what the lesson last week was about. Let others help give the background. You help as well until you have a complete picture of the Moses' story.

Say: "Today we will see what happened one day when Moses was keeping the sheep. Where was Moses in verse 1?" Direct the study by asking the following questions and using your Bible and your Background Study.

"Why do you suppose Moses was in the western part of the wilderness?"

'What was the name of the mountain there?"

"What is its other name?" (Sinai)

"Who was the 'angel of the Lord'?"

"What strange thing did Moses see?"

"What did he do when he saw this bush that burned without being consumed?"

"What happened then?"

"What did God do then?"

"Why did Moses take off his shoes?"

"Who did God say that he was?"

"Why did Moses hide his face?"

"What did God tell Moses?"

"What does it mean for God to come down?"

"How did Moses take the news that he was to go to Pharaoh?"

"Do you suppose he may have been afraid because of the crime he had committed in Egypt?"

"What did God say to reassure Moses?"

Say: "God used a very unusual way to call Moses. God wanted a man, and he called him."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "When God wants a man or a woman to do a job, he calls him or her to do it. If there are classes to be taught, God is calling people to teach. If there are churches which need a pastor, God is calling some man to be that pastor. If there are books to be written God is calling people to write them. What about you? Is it possible that God is calling you to do some work for him? Does he want you to witness to your friend at work or to your neighbour who lives nearby? Does he want you to start a ministry to the youth? Could he be calling you to begin a choir?"

"Let us bow our heads and ask God to give us the strength to answer his call."

CHAPTER THREE

LET MY PEOPLE GO

Background Scripture: 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).

Teaching Aim: I will teach my students that God rewards obedience.

Teaching Aids: Find two or three Christians in the church who have had the experience of receiving a blessing from God because they were obedient to God. Ask them to come to the class meeting to share their experience. Tell each of them they will have five minutes to share how their experience of obedience was rewarded. Be sure to tell them the class meeting time, where you meet, and any other information they may need to do the job you are asking them to do.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In Exodus 5:1 Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh to ask him to allow the people to go into the wilderness to hold a feast to honour God. What they were asking was that Pharaoh allow them to return to the land of their fathers so they could celebrate a solemn occasion. This was a common occurrence among ancient peoples. But Moses was asking more than a simple request to go have a feast. He was asking Pharaoh to allow him to change the allegiance of the Israelites from Pharaoh to God.

In Exodus 11:1-6 we see what happened after God had brought nine plagues upon the Egyptians without success. Pharaoh still refused to allow the people to go even after nine horrible manifestations of God's power.

Note in this section that God chose to bring this plague at night. The Egyptians thought Pharaoh was the incarnation of the sun. (This means that he was the sun in human form). They believed that the sun fought a snake which symbolized darkness all night long every night. Usually the sun (Pharaoh) triumphed over darkness, and a new day dawned. God chose to fight his battle and win it during the darkness.

Note, too, in these verses that the first born were those to die. In ancient thinking if the first born of any clan died, it was like the whole clan died. God used this way to show that he was greater than Pharaoh and all the land of Egypt.

The "great cry" of verse 6 was heard throughout the land and reminds us that at the final judgement a great cry will fill the world as God conquers evil.

Exodus 13:17-22 tells us that Moses was able to lead the people out of Egypt after the deaths of all the first-born among the Egyptians. He followed God's direction, and did not head up the coast road which would have been the shortest distance. Instead he led them toward the Red Sea. This would allow them to avoid coming upon Egyptian fortifications.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "In chapter two we studied about how Moses was called to do a special job for God. At first he tried very hard to resist God. In the end, though, he chose to be obedient to God. In our lesson today we are going to see how God blessed his obedient children and how he treated the disobedient Egyptians."

Interpretation

Tell the students to open their Bibles to Exodus 5:1. Have this verse read aloud.

Say: "Moses finally agreed to confront Pharaoh. We need to remember that this took very great courage for Moses. He had been a member of the household of Pharaoh. But he had rejected his Egyptian 'family' when he killed the Egyptian man. He ran away, and he had been a shepherd in a quiet land for forty years. He had long ago put away any warlike tendencies he might have had. He had become a gentle shepherd who was afraid even to speak to anyone so mighty as Pharaoh.

"But for God's sake, Moses took courage and went to Pharaoh. He told him that God wanted the people to come out to the wilderness where they were to celebrate a holy day.

"This was a common thing among ancient people. They frequently travelled to other places so they could observe some solemn occasion.

"When Moses and Aaron asked Pharaoh to let the people go, they themselves did not know what God was going to have to do in Egypt to force Pharaoh to let the people go. The story goes on from here with God bringing plague after plague upon the Egyptians. Finally, though, it became necessary for God to take control. He had to take matters into his own hands."

Say: "Let us read what happened. Turn in your Bibles to Exodus 11:1-6." Have these verses read.

Say: "God now prepared his Hebrew people to leave the land. He told

them to go to their Egyptian neighbours and ask them to give them silver and gold jewelry. He told them what God was about to do. God was about to kill all the first-born among the Egyptians. He told them what they must do."

Say: "The people followed what God commanded. They borrowed the jewelry from their neighbours. They celebrated a special meal. They put blood upon the door post. They waited for God to tell them to go. They were obedient. And God did just exactly what he said he would do."

Continue: "God sent his death angel into the land. The angel took the first-born of all the Egyptians, but he allowed the firstborn of the Hebrews to live. Then Moses led the people out of the land of Egypt."

Have the students turn to Exodus 13:17-22 and have one read these verses.

Say: "God led the Hebrews out in a general northward way. He led them toward the wilderness and toward the Red Sea. They travelled in this direction to avoid armed encampments of the Egyptians."

Continue: "As they travelled, God sent a cloud before them by day and fire by night. God was there with them, contributing his presence to the journey."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "God commanded the Egyptians, and they refused to obey. He commanded the Hebrews, and they obeyed and were saved out of slavery. We have some guests with us today who will share an experience from their lives with us. Each of them will tell us how they obeyed God and received a blessing for doing so."

Allow each to speak. Ask the students to feel free and ask any questions they may want to ask. Make this a casual, sharing time.

After they finish, remind the students that God is aware when we obey him and when we do not.

Close with prayer, asking God to help us to obey him in everything we do.

CHAPTER FOUR

CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM

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).

Teaching Aim: I want to teach my students that they should praise God for every victory in their lives.

Teaching Aids: If you can find a picture of the event in today's lesson, bring it to class. It is hard to imagine what a miracle God performed without a picture to show God's children walking along with walls of water on each side. Perhaps you can draw a picture if you cannot find one.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In chapter three we studied the beginning of the exodus event. Some scholars say that the deliverance from the Egyptians did not occur until the events of this lesson; that is, until the parting of the sea to allow the Hebrews to cross over.

We are unsure just how far the Hebrews had travelled when they came to the Red Sea. Before them was the sea, behind them were the pursuing Egyptians. It was a moment when the Hebrews needed a miracle.

God allowed his people to cross the sea as if they were walking along the shore. But the Egyptians coming along behind were not given that privilege. As soon as Moses' people had arrived on shore, the great walls of water returned to their normal place. How terrified the Egyptians must have been to see the great walls of water come down from both sides!

Verses 30 and 31 tell us that the Lord had the victory. To the forces of the Egyptians it was a bitter defeat. But to the Israelites it was more than just a victory over the armies of Pharaoh. Rather it showed them for all time that God is greater than even the mighty Egypt, thus, greater than any nation.

Moses led his people in a great song of jubilation and celebration giving God the glory for the happy conquering of the enemy.

In Exodus 15:20-21 Miriam, the sister of Moses, led the women in singing and dancing. Again this was a celebration for what God had

done. The people recognized that the victory was not theirs, but the Lord's.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Tell this story: "Once there was a boy whose father died when he was very young. The boy's mother did the best she could to raise her child. She bought school clothes, payed school fees and fed the child by her hard work. She prayed for God to help her provide for her child. God did.

"The boy went to a Christian secondary school. There he became a Christian. Soon after that one of the teachers told him he had watched him running and thought he had talent. The boy was glad to know the teacher thought he might be a good runner.

"The teacher began to work with the boy, showing him how to get a bit more distance from each stride. He taught him how to dress so he could run his fastest. The teacher bought him shoes that were tight on his feet, but strongly made. The teacher did more than that, though. He prayed for the boy each day when they met for practice. He told the boy that he could be great if he would depend upon God for his strength. The boy did that.

"He began to enter races around the country and won most of them. Finally, it was time for the great Olympic Games. The boy wanted to try out for the team for his country. He prayed and God showed him that he should try.

"The boy went to the trials for the Olympics. He tried very hard. He prayed very hard. He made the team. He was very happy and thanked God for giving him this great opportunity.

"Then the day came for him to go to the Olympics. The boy was no longer a boy. He was a young man. His body had grown and become strong. He knew he could depend on God for the strength to run a good race.

"The time came for the young man's race to be run. He was praying very hard as he dressed in the running suit of his country. As he fastened on his light running shoes, he continued to pray. As he went to the starting place, he was praying. As he looked at the runners he saw how fine they were. He wondered if he could beat them in the race.

"The runners placed their feet in the starting blocks. Together they bent forward into the starting position. Then the gun sounded, and they were off. Down the track they all sped, keeping in a group. Lap followed lap while the group kept fairly close together. Then, the young man realized that the race was nearly over, and he gave a mighty kick. His speed increased. He never looked back to see where the other runners were. He kept his eyes on the track

ahead of him. He felt he was running a fine race and that no one was near him.

"In front of the young man, he suddenly saw the tape that stretched across the track. The first one to reach the tape was the winner. The young man kept running with all the speed he had, and he raised his arms as he ran across the tape. He had won! His prize was an Olympic Gold Medal.

"The young man was so happy when he went to the victor's stand to receive his prize. He was very happy when the reporters from the newspapers, television and radio crowded around them.

"One of the reporters thrust a microphone in front of him and asked, 'How did you win this race?' He wanted to know the young man's racing strategy. But instead of telling him his strategy, he said, 'I won with the God's help! This race belongs to God. All of my running wins are because of God. I just want to praise him today for letting me run as fast as I did.'"

Say: "This young man knew a wonderful secret. He knew he would be happiest if he gave God the praise for his victories. Our lesson today is about the Hebrews and about the opportunity they had to praise God for a great victory."

Interpretation

Have the students open their Bibles to Exodus 14:21-25. Have one read these verses. After the reading tell the students that this event took place after the Hebrews had travelled for a while.

Say: "It was an anxious time for the Israelites. They were standing before the sea with the Egyptians following closely behind. They were afraid that they would be lost, but God had another plan. What did he do?" Let the students answer.

If you have a picture of this event show it at this time. If you do not try to describe what happened so the students can "see" the picture in their minds.

Say: "God saved the Israelites that day." Tell the students to look at verses 30 and 31. Say: "This was the song that Moses led his people to sing to praise God for this great victory. Moses realized that the victory was indeed God's."

Have someone read Exodus 15:20-21. Say: "This is Miriam's and the women's song of praise to God. They, too, realized that this was God's victory."

Application To Our Lives

Ask: "Is there anyone here who can share an experience like this? Has God ever won a victory in your life like this? Would you share it? After a few have shared their experiences, ask them if they

praised God for the victory. Remind them that we should praise God for every victory he gives us. And remind them, too, that every victory is his. We should always give the praise where it is deserved."

Close the meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER FIVE

GOD CREATES A COVENANT PEOPLE

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).

Teaching Aim: I will teach my students what a covenant with God means. Then, I will encourage them to live in covenant with God.

Teaching Aids: Bring an agreement or contract to class with you. It can be a land (plot) contract, a marriage contract or any other legal agreement that you have or can borrow from someone else.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

In Exodus 19:2-9, we find that the children of Israel have arrived at Mount Sinai. This was in fulfillment of the "sign" we studied in the second lesson in this book. God promised that Moses would return to this mountain. God has allowed him to do that.

Moses believed that God had his home upon the mountain of Sinai. Moses had been charged to bring God's children to him. As Moses started climbing up the mountain to speak to God, God called out to him. He told Moses that he wanted to enter into an agreement, a covenant relationship with the Hebrews. Moses was to act as God's advocate in arranging this covenant.

God began (in verse 4) to remind the Hebrews of his power. He brought them out of Egypt in a miraculous way. He is a God of miracles and great power. If the Hebrews entered into a relationship with him, they would have access to the mighty power of God.

The covenant which God offered was to be based on the Hebrews' faithfulness and obedience to God. They were to "keep the covenant" which meant to observe the law. Verse five goes on to stress that God owns all the world, but out of it all he chose the Hebrews to be his special people. This was an extremely generous act of grace on the part of God.

Verse 6 emphasizes that God was making his covenant with the people, not with their leaders or with their priesthood. They would become a nation of priests, set apart to do a special job for God.

In verses 7 and 8, Moses reported God's offer to the, elders and leaders. They agreed to God's proposal.

In verse 9 God began to prepare Moses and the people to follow him in obedience. He would appear before Moses in a thick cloud. God was not willing to have the people see him, but he wanted them to hear his voice so that they would believe Moses.

In Deuteronomy 11:8-9, Moses repeated the conditions of the covenant. He reminded the people that the covenant rested upon their obedience to God. He must be the Lord of their lives. The reason Israel had arrived in a very bad situation was because they had failed to remember to be obedient to God. If they were not obedient to God, he would not allow them to live upon the land he had picked out for them.

In Deuteronomy 11:18-9, Moses told the people that they must teach the law. It was not enough to expect people to know the law without someone teaching it to them. Those who already knew the law were to read it constantly so they would know it.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Show the document you have brought with you. Explain what it is. Tell your students that each party in the agreement must comply with their part of the contract or it becomes worthless.

Say: "When the children of Israel were led out of the land of Egypt, God brought them to the holy mountain of Sinai where he offered them a contract or covenant. We will study that covenant today."

Interpretation

Have your students open their Bibles to Exodus 19:2-9. Say: "We will read these verses to see what conditions God put upon the people."

Tell one student to read the verses. Tell them all to keep their Bibles open so they may search for the answers to some questions.

Ask: "Where were the children of Israel and their leader, Moses?" (They were encamped at the foot of Mount Sinai.)

Ask: "Why was this mountain important to Moses?" (God had promised him that if he would serve as leader of the exodus of the people from Egypt, he would come back to this mountain.)

Explain that this mountain was important to Moses because he believed that God lived upon the top of it. Therefore, the whole mountain was holy in the extreme.

Explain, too, that this was about three months after the departure from Egypt. The group had begun to settle down to the new life of travel.)

Ask: "What happened when Moses started climbing up the mountain to talk to God?" (God spoke to him.)

Ask: "What did God want Moses to tell the people?" (He wanted them to know that he wanted a covenant relationship with them.)

Say: "The covenant relationship that God wanted with the Hebrews is the same kind of relationship that we have with someone with whom we enter into a contract or agreement in the sense that each has responsibilities to the other. If either failed to carry out his responsibilities the contract would be worthless."

Continue: "God wanted the Hebrews to remember that the covenant would be based on some solid facts about his ability to carry out his part of the agreement. What did he remind them about?" (He reminded them that he had used miracles and enormous power to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt.)

Ask: "What would be the Hebrews' share of the covenant?" (They would have to obey God and be faithful to him.)

Ask: "What would they become?" (a kingdom of priests and a holy nation) Say: "This means that God was making the covenant with the people, not with the leaders or a group of priests. The people themselves would become priests. We could say that the children of Israel would serve as the church of God until Jesus Christ came."

Say: "At a later time, Moses reminded the people all about the covenant. Let us read what he said in Deuteronomy 11:8-9."

Have these verses read. Say: "Some problems had come upon the nation because they had failed to obey God and to be faithful to his lordship. The nation's strength would come only through their obedience to God. Unless they obeyed they could not live in the Promised Land.

"Moses told the people how to remain faithful to the covenant. They were to constantly teach it to themselves and to their children. Let us read Deuteronomy 11:18-19." Have these two verses read.

Say: "God wanted his people to be constantly reminded of their responsibilities. But more than that, they were to pass the law along to their children so that the children would be in covenant with God, too."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "God expects us to live in covenant with him. What does this mean?" (We must accept Jesus as the Saviour and the Lord of our lives. If we do this, we will be given our Promised Land, heaven,

to live in with Jesus forever.)

Ask: "How do we enter into this covenant with God?" Allow discussion.

Say: "If there is one who has not accepted Jesus as their Saviour and Lord, I would be happy to talk with you after the class meeting so I can explain to you how easy it is to enter into this covenant relationship."

Continue: "What does God expect us to do about his Word?" (He expects us to teach it, not only to our children, but to others around us. He also expects us to read and study the Word for our own spiritual growth.)

Say: "God wants to live in covenant with us. He is faithful to us. Are we faithful to him?"

Close the meeting with prayer asking God to give the class members the ability and strength to obey and follow God in their lives.

CHAPTER SIX

A WORSHIPPING PEOPLE

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).

Teaching Aim: I want my students to understand that true worship is more than attending a church worship service.

Teaching Aids: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Exodus 33:9-16 is concerned mostly with the question Moses and the people had. If God lived at Sinai, how could he travel with them into the Promised Land?

It was the custom in the camp to take a special tent and erect it outside the general encampment. This was to show God's holiness or "separated condition." He was the God of the people, not their contemporary.

When the people needed the Lord's help for anything, they went out to the tent. The tent was called "the tent of meeting" because it was there that God met man.

Every evening Moses went out to the tent. When the people saw Moses go out, they watched him go. Then a cloud would descend and shut the door of the tent off from the view of the people. When this happened the people knew that God was with Moses. Then they worshipped him from the doors of their tents.

One evening Moses decided to ask God what he meant by saying that he would not go up into the Promised Land with them. (See Exodus 33:3.) Because of Moses' integrity and his sincerity, God relented and told Moses in verse 14 that he would go up to claim the land with his chosen people.

(Remember that God was angry with the people. While Moses was up on Sinai, the people asked Aaron to make them something to worship. He built them a golden calf which was like the Egyptians gods. The Hebrews worshipped it. This was when God said that he could not accompany the people on their journey.)

Exodus 35:29 tells us what happened when Moses asked the people to bring a freewill offering. The offering was to be used to build a

permanent tabernacle. God would live there, the people thought. The priests would meet him there just as Moses had met with God in the tent.

The next chapter tells us that the people brought far more than was necessary. They brought so much that Moses had to ask them to stop.

A freewill offering is one that is given willingly by the people. God stirred up the hearts of the people to give, and they gave.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Ask: "Why do we bring money to the church?" Allow free discussion here. You may hear some surprising things. Many people think they bring money to give to the pastor only. Others know it is an offering to God, but they do not know how God is to get the money. You help the discussion by asking questions and encouraging everyone to talk.

You are trying to get the students to agree that they bring money to church as an act of worship. It is for no other purpose.

Say: "We bring our money to the church in obedience to God. It is not so that we can have a good pastor, or to get a worthy offering for Christmas or Easter or to build a church. We bring our money as an act of worship. Sometimes we bring something in place of money. We might bring a chicken, some eggs, some beans or fruit. This is just like bringing our money. We bring it because we love and honour our Lord."

Continue: "Our lesson today is about a time when God had to renew his covenant with the Hebrews."

Interpretation

Ask the students to open their Bibles to Exodus 33:9-16. Have these verses read while the other students follow the reading in their Bibles.

Say: "These verses tell us that Moses and the people were wondering how they could go up and claim the Promised Land without the Lord. I want someone to read Exodus 33:3."

Have that verse read, then say, "After God made the covenant with the people, he called Moses to come up the mountain. They visited together for some time. Then God gave him the Ten Commandments to bring down from the mountain."

Continue: "When Moses got down he found that the people had left off worshipping God and were worshipping a golden calf. This literally made Moses sick. He hurled the tables of stone down and they broke. He was so sickened by what he saw around him, and he

was ashamed of his people before God."

Continue: "God then told Moses what we just read. He would not go with them to claim the Promised Land. Our lesson today tells us of the argument that Moses used to persuade God to give them his presence again. The people had broken the covenant. Moses was begging God to renew the covenant. And he did. Read Exodus 33:17." Have the verse read aloud.

Say: "'The very thing' means that God would do the very thing that Moses asked. He would accompany the people into the Promised Land. We need to notice that even in Exodus 33:17, God did not go back on his agreement. He had promised them the land, and they would have it just as he said."

Continue: "God told Moses that he would renew his agreement with the people. As a sign that they would also renew their covenant with God, they were to make a beautiful tabernacle. God had been meeting with the people outside the camp in a regular tent. But God decided that his place to meet the people should be a different place. Perhaps he also wanted it to cost the people something."

Say: "God told the people to bring an offering of many different things. The tabernacle would be built of all these things. When the people began to bring their freewill offering, they brought too much. I want one of you to read Exodus 36:2-7."

Have these verses read, then say: "The people responded wonderfully well to God's call. I wonder if we are as careful in giving as they were?"

Application To Our Lives

Say: "God still expects us to worship him with our tithes and our offerings. Of everything that we are given, we are to take one tenth of it and give it to God. Then, we are to take other money or things and offer them to God as a freewill offering. It should be a love gift to God, a way to tell him we love him. I wonder if we are obedient in giving God the tenth he demands? I wonder if we ever give God something extra just because we love him? I wonder if we are really worshipping God when we give our tithes and offerings? We need to be thinking about him in a way of worship. We need to be magnifying him in our lives with our gifts."

Ask the students to bow their heads and close their eyes. When every head is bowed and every eye is closed, ask: "Have you failed to worship God with your money and your other possessions? If so, ask God right now to forgive you."

Wait about one minute, then say: "God will strengthen us to give, and he will bless us when we give. Let us ask God to help us give."

Wait about one minute, then pray asking God to help the students give from their hearts.

CHAPTER SEVEN

UNBELIEF DELAYS FULFILLMENT OF COVENANT

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).

Teaching Aim: The Israelites showed that they did not have enough faith in God to attempt what God had told them to do. I want to teach my students that they, too, can fail to do what God calls them to do if they lack faith.

Teaching Aids: Write the following on a chalk board or a large paper.

Have it ready before the class arrives. Leave some space to write other items:

FAITH	LACK OF FAITH
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belief	disbelief
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boldness	fear
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adequacy	inadequacy
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security	insecurity
----------	------------

gain	loss
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blessings	punishment
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PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Our lesson today requires that we study a little of what happened before the verses we will read.

The Children of Israel had arrived at the Promised Land. Before they went in to claim the land for God, they began to have some doubts. Instead of having faith in God, they decided to have faith in the reports of twelve spies. These spies were to enter the land, see what was there and return to tell the people what a glorious place they were going.

The Hebrews sent out their spies and waited forty days. When they returned, ten of them reported that it would be impossible to take

the land. Two, Joshua and Caleb, brought a good report saying that the land was a favourable one.

Numbers 13:30-33 tells us that Caleb tried to quiet the fears of the people. The ten had reported a land filled with giants. Caleb said that there would be no difficulty in overcoming the land. Caleb was displaying great faith in God. The people showed little faith in God's ability to do what he had promised to do.

The ten reported that the land was "a land that devours its inhabitants." This probably meant that it did not produce enough food for its people. It is doubtful that this was true, though, since they brought back a single cluster of grapes which was so large two men had to carry it on poles between them.

In Numbers 14:1-3, the people wept bitterly all through the night. Finally, they wanted to choose a captain to lead them back to the land of slavery, Egypt. They could not believe that God could do such a thing to them.

In Numbers 14:8-10 Joshua and Caleb tried to calm the people. They did their best to reassure them that the land was theirs. They reminded them that the Lord was with them and would help them win over the "giants" who lived in Canaan. They begged them to have faith in God, and not rebel against him.

Moses again had to talk things over with God. He had to ask God's mercy on his rebellious people. He had to beg forgiveness for the people's lack of faith. In Numbers 14:18-23 God told Moses that he would not desert the people, but he would have to punish them. No one who had rebelled would live to enter into the Promised Land.

Then, the people turned about and headed south. It would be necessary that they detour around the Amalekites and the Canaanite. They would enter the Promised Land from the east.

But God promised that Caleb's faithfulness would be rewarded. He had a "different spirit," one of faithfulness. He would be allowed to enter into the Promised Land.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Show the words you have written on the chalk board or paper. Say: "When we have faith in something, we also have belief, boldness, a feeling of adequacy (feeling that we can do the job), security, a sense of gain and we get blessings. When we lack faith in something, we disbelieve it, we fear to trust it, we feel inadequate and insecure, we experience a feeling of loss and we are often punished in some way because we did not trust. This is particularly true concerning our faith in God. Can you think of other words that describe our feelings when we have faith or fail to have it?"

Give time for the students to discuss what you have written. They may question some on items you have written. They may even disagree with some of them. That is all right. The purpose of this discussion is to start the students thinking about what faith and lack of faith brings about.

Conclude the discussion by saying: "We are going to study about twelve people today. Ten had no faith and brought a bad report to the people. Two had great faith and brought a good report. Let us see how God dealt with the two groups."

Interpretation

Have the students open their Bibles. Have the following read one right after the other: Numbers 13:30-33; Numbers 14:1-3, Numbers 14:8-10 and Numbers 14:18-23.

When the reading is complete, ask if one of the students is able to tell us the story of what happened. Tell him that you will start the story, then he can complete it.

Start the story: "The Children of Israel had arrived at the Promised Land. Before they went in to claim the land for God, they began to have some doubts. Instead of having faith in God, they decided to send some spies into the land to bring back reports.

"The Hebrews sent out their spies and they waited. Forty days passed and the spies returned, carrying a cluster of grapes so heavy two men had to carry them on poles between them. How happy the people were.

"But the spies had some stories to tell. Two of them, Caleb and Joshua, painted a wonderful picture of the Promised Land. It was a glorious place. But the others told of men so big they were giants. The people became very upset and worried."

Now let the students tell the story. They may want to tell it in sections. It does not matter. Let them tell the rest of the story.

When they conclude the story, tell them they have done well in teaching the lesson. But ask them: "What does this story have to do with us?"

Application To Our Lives

Let the students tell you what the story has to do with us. (That we, too, must have faith so we may accomplish all God intends us to accomplish in this life). Agree with them that when we follow God's plan and have faith in him, we can do wonderful things. But without faith, we are defeated from the beginning. Then, just as the Children of Israel, we may be punished. We might lose the prize we wanted to have. We will lose our opportunity for great blessings and joy.

Conclude the meeting with prayer that the students will act upon faith, believing that God will do what he has promised to do in their lives.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CLAIMING THE PROMISED LAND

Background Study: 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).

Teaching Aim: I want my students to understand that God keeps his promises. Further, I want them to know that the Bible contains many of God's promises to us. I want them to understand that all they have to do is to claim them.

Teaching Aids: Have a chalk board or a paper where you can write down some of the promises God has made. You will ask the students to identify these promises in the Application To Our Lives section.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Four events are recorded in today's study to tell us that the people of the travelling band of Hebrews were claiming their new land.

The first event was the setting up of a memorial made of stones. We read about this in Joshua 4:4-7. If one reads all of chapter three and chapter four, one gets the impression that there were two crossings of the Jordan River and two memorials built. Instead try to think of this as two parallel stories of one event. The priests picked up the stones, carried them over to build a memorial, then the people crossed over.

The twelve stones represented the twelve tribes. The stones would be like an altar. They would remind the people in future generations that God had performed a miracle here.

Reading chapter three allows us to know that the waters were held back like a dam holds water back. This allowed the ark of covenant to be carried out into the Jordan. There the men carrying the ark of the covenant stood until all the children of Israel had passed over. This reminds us, of course, of the holding back of the waters of the Red Sea that we studied in chapter three of this book.

The memorial is to cause the people to remember all God did in bringing the Children of Israel to the Promised Land.

A second event is recorded in Joshua 5:10-12. This event occurred

soon after the Hebrews arrived in the Promised Land. At the time they were still eating the manna provided by God. When the time came to observe the Passover, there was manna, but the next day the manna was gone. The people ate unleavened cakes and parched grain from the land of Canaan. No manna was seen again. God had brought the people safely home to a land where food was abundant.

Our third event is the taking of the city of Jericho in Joshua 6:1-5. This was a strategic city which had to be taken so that the Israelites could take the hill country. It sat in a position so that it could defend the entire area.

Jericho covered eight or nine acres. To walk around the city would not require more than 15 or 20 minutes. But the Israelites had to move out beyond the reach of the arrows of the archers, so the walk was probably thirty minutes or a bit longer.

Jericho residents knew that they were about to be attacked. They had shut the entrances and the exits. No one could enter or leave the city. We would say the city was under siege.

Joshua commanded the priests to lead the warriors around the city. They were to carry trumpets. These were curved rams' horns, not the long straight musical instruments we usually think about when we think of trumpets.

For six days, the Israelites marched silently around the city one time each day. Then, the seventh day, led by the seven priests, the people walked around seven times. The priests blew their trumpets and the walls of the city fell down flat. This showed the great power of God. It also showed that it was God's will that the city be taken by the Israelites.

It would be well to note that the number seven had special significance to both the Israelites and to the besieged residents of Jericho. They knew something of great power was about to be unleashed.

The fourth event took place in Joshua 11:23. God gave all the land into the hands of the Israelites, and they divided it by tribes. This may be an oversimplification by the writer here. In Joshua 13:1, God told Joshua that there was yet much land to be conquered.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Our lesson today is about four big events in the years of conquest for the Israelites. There were many more events than these four, of course. We will study the four as symbolic of all the events that took place."

Continue: "God meant that all the people of Canaan would be defeated and that the land would be given entirely into the hands

of the Israelites. Let us see how God went about this work."

Interpretation

After you have greeted all the class members, and you have taken care of all the necessary business of the class (such as reports of sick or absent members, record keeping, planning of prayer times or offerings, etc.) divide the class into four groups.

Ask each group to choose a chairperson and reporter. Then they will sit together and discuss the Scripture you have given them. They must be ready for their reporter "to teach" that section of Scripture. They may borrow your book for the Background Study. They may use their own student book. They may use the Bible. All will discuss the verses together and decide what they want to report to the class.

Give one group Joshua 4:4-7, the second group Joshua 5:10-12, the third group Joshua 6:1-5 and the fourth group Joshua 11:23. Let them divide into the groups and begin their discussion. You go around to each group and make sure they are doing what has been asked.

After 10 or 15 minutes, call the groups back together. Ask the first group to report while the others listen attentively. Then allow the second, third and fourth groups to report.

When they have finished the "teaching," congratulate them on the good work they have done.

Say: "God promised the people that he would give them the land of Canaan, and he did just what he promised he would do. God is always faithful to carry out his promises to his people."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "God has made many promises to us. I want us to find out what some of them are today. I will write some verses on the board and I want us to read these verses to see what God has promised."

Write the following on the chalk board or on large paper: John 15:7; Revelation 3:20; Malachi 3:10; Romans 10:12; 2 Peter 1:11; Luke 12:32; Revelation 21:7; Phillippians 1:6; Matthew 10:32; 1 John 1:9; Isaiah 1:18.

Follow this procedure. Ask the students to read the verse. This may be done aloud or silently as you wish. Then one will tell what promise God has made in the verse.

When you finish each verse's reading and telling of the promise contained therein, say: "God has promised many, many things. These are just a small example of all that he has promised. I wonder if we claim these promises from God?" Allow the students to discuss this. They may wish to name other promises they have claimed.

After they have discussed the promises of God as fully as they want to do, close the class meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER NINE

DIFFICULTY IN KEEPING THE COVENANT

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).

Teaching Aim: I want my students to know that they can have false Gods in their lives like the children of Israel began to worship false gods.

Teaching Aids: Have a chalk board or paper ready to use in the lesson.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Judges 2:13-23 tell us about a people who had a wonderful covenant relationship with the Lord. They disregarded the covenant, however, and began to worship false gods. This is a very sad time in the lives of the Israelite nation.

We can look at the study today in four scenes or pictures. This will help us understand what was happening in the wonderful land of promise.

The first scene or picture is found in Judges 2:11-13. The picture is the sin of Israel. The evil is that the people turned away from God and began to serve the Baals. Baals were the little local gods which the people turned to. The Canaanite people who were in the land had worshipped these Baals for a long time. Because the Israelites did not drive the other peoples out of Israel, they began to combine the worship of God with the worship of Baal.

Baal was the male god that the Canaanite people worshipped. Ashtaroth was the female god they worshipped. These were gods of the land. The people felt that one must worship these gods so that the land would bring forth good crops.

"They forsook the Lord, and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth" (Joshua 2:13) are very sad words. The people of Israel may not have totally abandoned their worship of God, but they might as well have. God sees it like that. When another god is worshipped, God cannot accept worship from that person. He has commanded that we have no other gods.

The act of worshipping Baal and Ashtaroth was the act of breaking the covenant on the part of the people. God did not break the

covenant. He says in Judges 2:1 that he will never break his covenant with the people.

The second scene or picture in our study today is the punishment of God upon the people. We find this in Judges 2:14-15. God allowed enemies to come in to plunder the land. The power of their enemies grew until finally the Israelites could not withstand the onslaught. God was no longer fighting on their side. "They were in sore straits" tells us that the condition of the people became pitiful indeed.

Our third picture comes in Judges 2:16-18. God decided to give judges to the people. Some of these judges may have been lawyers or advocates in the real sense of the word. Most of them, though, were liberators. God used them to drive out the oppressors and restore the government into the hands of the Israelite people. They were charismatic people. This means that they generated a great spirit of leadership.

The fourth scene, though, shows that the people did not continue to follow the way of the Lord when he would deliver them. Just as soon as they could, they went back to the worship of Baal and Ashtaroath. Finally, their condition became more and more pitiful. God came to the conclusion that he could no longer be with the people. Judges 2:23 says: "So the Lord left those nations, not driving them out at once, and he did not give them into the power of Joshua." God had to leave the people in misery. The nations they had not driven out were left to continue to oppress the people of Israel.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "The children of Israel began to break their covenant with God. They began to worship the gods of Baal and Ashtaroath. When they did that, God could not tolerate it. He had to punish them.

"It is always sad when God's people fail to follow God. When we begin to worship other gods, God will not accept our worship. To worship a false god is to sin. The children of Israel began to fall into very serious sin."

Interpretation

Tell the students to open their Bibles to Judges 2:11-23. Have these verses read aloud. Say: "The children of Israel were living in the Promised Land. God was fulfilling his promises to them. But the Israelites had made a very grave mistake. They had allowed some of the original Canaanites to remain in the land. They should have driven them all out of the land."

"The Israelites began to intermarry with the Canaanite. This is usually what happens when people move into an inhabited country. When the people began to take wives among the 'foreigners' they

began to worship the gods of their wives. That was another extremely grave mistake. God was not pleased, but he did not withdraw his covenant promises."

Continue: "The Israelites worshipped the Baals and the Ashtarothe. These were gods of fertility. One, Baal, was male. Ashtarothe was female. Worship of these gods required the performance of certain sexual acts. Before God this was an extremely disagreeable thing."

Ask: "What did God do when the people began to break the covenant?" Allow discussion here. Make sure that the students understand that God was very angry. He had to punish the people with whom he had a special covenant. Explain that he allowed nations outside of Canaan to come in the plunder the land.

Ask: "What happened when these nations came into Canaan?" Allow discussion.

Ask: "What did God do to try to redeem the situation?" Discuss the judges and how they tried to help the people. Explain that these were people who became popular with people and led them to conquer whatever enemy the Israelites were fighting.

Say: "Even though the judges were successful in leading the people for a while, they could not keep the people from going back to their worship of the false gods."

Ask: "What happened in the last few verses of today's reading?"

Say: "God had allowed the nations outside of Canaan to come in to defeat the people of Israel. Now he turned them over to the nations who lived in Canaan with them. This was so much harder. It is one thing to fight the nations outside one's national border, but it is quite another to fight people who live right there with you."

Tell a student to read Judges 2:1. Ask: "What did God promise here?"

Say: "We worship a God who will not break promises. We may break our promises to him, but he will never break his to us."

Application To Our Lives

Say: "Sin is breaking our covenant relationship with God. It is just like taking a false God. We allow acts of ours to interfere with the worship of God. I want to write some of the sins on the board that cause separation with God. I would like you to help me. Can you name one sin that we could write?"

Allow the students to name sins. You will probably write on every available space on the chalk board or on the paper you have. Help the students to see that when they commit sin, they are following false gods in their lives.

Close the meeting with prayer, asking God to forgive you for following false gods.

CHAPTER TEN

RENEWING THE COVENANT

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).

Teaching Aim: I want my students to know that they can always renew their covenant relationship with God.

Teaching Aids: Write on the chalk board or on a large paper:

The making of the covenant

The breaking of the covenant

The renewal of the covenant

PREPARING THIS LESSON

Background Study

In our last chapter we learned that the nation of Israel broke the covenant with God. God tried again and again to help them by sending judges to lead them out of defeat. God tried to renew the covenant with his people. In our lesson for today, God uses Joshua to call the people back to him. We will see how effective Joshua was in calling the people to God.

Joshua called the people together at Shechem. This was an ancient shrine located at the east end of the valley between the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim. The place was considered holy (sacred). Read Deuteronomy 27 and Joshua 8:30-35.

The people Joshua called were not just the people who were under the old covenant. Instead, he called both those who had been under the old covenant and those who were closely associated with the clan at the time. For the new people, they would have the opportunity to decide whether they wanted to live under the covenant or not.

Joshua 24:1-13 is an account of God's interaction with the people. He began with Terah and came up through the claiming of the Promised Land.

Joshua 24:14-15 states Joshua's position. I will serve the Lord!

Then he asked them, "Whom will you serve?" Joshua said they must fear the Lord. This does not mean to really be afraid of God but to reverence and honour him. It would be necessary for them to put away all other gods. Then, the choice is put before the people, "Do you choose Almighty God?"

Verses 16-18 tell us that the people immediately began to make their declarations for the Lord. They recognized his power and might.

Joshua 24:19-28 tells us that Joshua was not content with their immediate response. He wanted to put the situation before them just as honestly and as completely as he could.

In verse 19, Joshua reminded the people that they had not been very faithful in the past. They had had a chance to keep the covenant, but they failed miserably.

In verse 20, Joshua made clear that if the people accepted the covenant, they would be expected to keep it. If they failed, God would punish them. If they succeeded, blessings would follow.

In verses 21 and 22, the people again declared their allegiance to God. Joshua told them that they were witnesses against themselves.

That is, they knew what they had done. No one else need charge them that they agreed or did not agree.

To prove their acceptance the people were told in verse 23 to put away all the other gods they had. They were false and unworthy of worship. In verse 24 they declared that they would follow God.

Joshua told the people in verse 25 that there were laws that they must now follow. He explained these to the people. Then, he wrote the words in the Book of God. Verses 26 and 27 tell about a great stone that was set up to commemorate the day and the agreement. This stone was to be left at the sacred shrine. It would be a reminder to the people of what they had done.

Then Joshua sent the people back to the lands of their inheritance. (verse 29)

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Show what you have written on the chalk board or on paper. Explain that this is the history of the Hebrew people. They made a covenant with God. They broke the covenant. They renewed the covenant.

Say: "The people of God had a hard time being the people of God. They continually failed to be faithful to him. But through it all, God remained faithful to them and to his commitment to them. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. He never changes. He is

always there offering to forgive and to start again."

Continue: "In our lesson today Joshua called the people back to God. He offered them a renewal of their commitment to God."

Interpretation

Tell the Adults to turn in their Bibles to Joshua 24:15. Tell someone to read verses 15 and 16, then let someone else read verses 19:28.

Say: "God wanted to give the Israelites another chance. He also wanted to offer the covenant to some of the people who were not under the covenant. These were people who were living in the land when the Israelites returned from Egypt. They may have been descendants of Abraham, but they had not gone into Egypt with Jacob.

"Joshua called the people to Shechem which was a religious shrine. There he outlined the history of God's intervention in the course of men's lives. Then, he asked them whom they would serve. Would they choose God, or did they wish to serve other gods? Joshua told the people that he and his family would serve God."

Ask: "Did the people decide to serve God?" (Yes.)

Say: "Joshua thought the people answered too quickly. They had not thought thoroughly about what they were agreeing to. So he told them they could not serve God in verse 19. He was saying that they had not shown in the past that they could serve God."

Say: "The people agreed once again that they would serve God. What did Joshua do then?" Allow discussion of the remainder of the verses. Help the students to say that Joshua told them the laws of God, then he wrote them in the Book of Law. Later, he erected a stone to remind them of their contract with God.

Application To Our Lives

Ask: "Do you think the Israelites did what they said they would do?" Allow discussion. Most of your students will know that they did not. They continued to follow God for a little while, then they stopped. This was the pattern they followed.

Say: "We are sometimes like the Children of Israel. We make our covenant with God, then after a time, we sin and break the covenant. When we do that we need to remember that we can renew our covenant with God. We can reestablish our relationship with him. God is always ready for us to return to him. He is merciful and full of grace. All we need to do is to ask forgiveness for our sins. That re-establishes our position with God."

Ask: "Is there one here today who needs to renew his covenant with God? I challenge you to do it. Confess your sins and tell God you

want to begin with him once again."

Close the meeting with prayer asking God to encourage the students to confess their sins and renew their relationship with him.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

GIDEON: GOD'S COURAGEOUS MAN

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).

Teaching Aim: I want to help my students know that God always gives the ability, talent and energy for any job he calls us to do.

Teaching Aids: Write on the chalk board or a large paper any jobs that need to be done in the church that your students might do. These may include:

- teaching a Bible class
- teaching a discipleship group
- leading a children's study
- taking the offering
- visiting the sick
- leading a choir
- visiting the elderly
- sewing
- reading to someone who cannot read
- leading the church music

Make your list fit your church and your class members.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

Our study today centers around a man named Gideon. Gideon was one of the great judges of Israel. God called him to the task through the use of an angel. This was a way of saying the Lord himself spoke to Gideon.

One day Gideon was beating out wheat. He was doing the job in the wine press so that the Midianites could not see him and take away the grain. The Midianites were currently in control in Canaan.

Our lesson comes from Judges 7:2-8 and 20-21. In the first six verses, we find God speaking to Gideon. The battle was about to be joined. The call had gone out to the people. The Israelites were about to contest the power of the Midianites. Thirty-two thousand men answered the Midianites.

Gideon encamped with his men beside the spring of Harod. The Midianites had their camp four miles north of there. Between the two armies was the Valley of Jezreel.

God looked at the mighty army of Gideon and told him the he would have to cut the numbers down. He did not want the soldiers to feel that they had won the battle on their own.

God told Gideon to send all those home who were afraid. Gideon tested the men in some way to determine which ones were afraid. We are not told how this testing was done. It may have been that the captains simply asked the men which ones which ones were afraid of the battle ahead. In any event, twenty-two thousand were found to be afraid. They were sent home, and only ten thousand remained.

Then, God looked at the remaining brave men. Again, he said they were too many. They would have to be reduced in number. Another test was given. The men were brought down to the spring and told to drink water. Those who knelt to drink were sent home. Three hundred men dipped the water up into their hands, and sitting back on their haunches they lapped the water up. This showed that they were alert and watchful. These three hundred became God's army.

Gideon had issued every man a clay pot with a torch inside and a trumpet. They were to fight a war with torches and trumpets.

About ten o'clock that night the army of Gideon approached the camp of the mighty army of the Midianites. At a signal from Gideon each man broke the clay pot exposing his bright shining torch, and he blew his trumpet. (verses 20-21)

The Midianites awoke to the crash of breaking pots, bright lights and the blare of trumpets. Shocked and greatly alarmed they fled into the night. God had defeated the hordes of Midian with clay pots, torches, trumpets and three hundred brave men.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Introduction

Show the class the list you have written on paper or on the chalk board. Say: "These are some jobs that need doing. I wonder if God is calling any of you to do these jobs. Sometimes it takes great courage to answer God's call and do the job he is asking of us. But God always provides all we need to do the job."

Continue: "In our lesson today God used some clay pots, some torches, some trumpets and three hundred brave men to defeat the mighty army of Midian. Let us see how he did that."

Interpretation

Have the students open their Bibles to Judges 7. Have them read verses two through eight. When they finish say: "Look back in verse one. Where was Gideon and his army?" Let the students answer. Ask: "Who was Gideon?" If the students do not know have them look at Judges 6:11-14. Then they can tell you who he was. Tell the class that the Lord was choosing Gideon to be a judge. He would be called

upon to lead the people for a certain time.

Ask: "How many men did Gideon begin with?" The information is in Judges 7:2-8. Say: "These were the men who answered the call of Gideon to fight the Midianites."

Ask: "What did God say about this great number?"

Ask: "What did God tell Gideon to do?"

Ask: "What kind of test do you think Gideon used to find out if the men were afraid or not?"

Ask: "How many men went home?"

Ask: "Was God satisfied with the ten thousand men that were left?"

Ask: "What further test did God tell Gideon to give the men?"

Ask: "Why was this a good test?" (It may have shown which of the men were most watchful and alert.)

Have a student read verses 20-21. Say: "This was the battle that was fought. Do you think it was a strange battle?"

Ask: "Did the soldiers of Gideon use bows and arrows?" "Did they use pots of hot oil?" "Did they use spears and shields?"

Ask: "What did they use?" Explain that the torches were lighted and hidden inside clay pots. When Gideon gave the signal, the soldiers broke the pots showing the torches. At the same time, they blew long blasts on their trumpets.

Ask: "What did the Midianites do? Why?"

Ask: "Who won the battle that day, the three hundred or God?"

Say: "God gives us what we need to do the jobs he calls us to do. He gave the three hundred the courage they needed and they won the battle for God."

Applications To Our Lives

Say: "God still expects us to depend upon him to do the work he calls us to do. Sometimes we are afraid, but he can see us through whatever the job is."

Continue: "There are many jobs here on the chalk board that need doing. If there is a job in a church, God is always calling someone to do it. Is he calling you to do one of these? Would you like to talk about it?" Encourage the students to discuss the jobs. See if they would be willing to do any of them. Remind them that God will provide all they need to do the job.

Close the meeting with prayer, asking God to call out people to do the jobs that are listed.

CHAPTER TWELVE

STRUGGLE AGAINST OPPOSITION

Background Scripture: Judges 13-16

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

Memory Verse

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

Teaching Aim: I hope through this lesson my students will come to understand better how God works in their lives.

Teaching Aids: None

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

The lesson before this one was about one of the judges of Israel, Gideon. He did wonderful things for the Lord because he kept himself under God's control. Our lesson today is about another of the judges of Israel, Samson. We will see that Samson was a very different person than Gideon was.

Judges 13:1 tells us that Israel had been ruled for forty years by the Philistines. This rule by the enemy power, the Philistines, came about once more because of the sin of Israel. They continually broke the covenant they had with God.

Judges 16:23-30 tell us the end of the Samson narrative. To make a complete picture of this man, we need to know something of his life.

Manoah and his wife had no children. Then ". . . the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, 'Behold you are barren and have no children; but you shall conceive and bear a son'" (Judges 13:3). The boy would be a Nazarite. She herself must not drink wine or other strong drink. She could not eat defiled food. Then, the son who would be born could not drink wine, no razor could come to his head and he could not touch anything dead.

Manoah's wife returned to tell him about the one who had told her she would have a child. She told him that he was a man of God who had the countenance of an angel.

Manoah prayed that he might also see this man, and God granted the wish. The man told Manoah what he had told his wife.

The woman had a child, and they called him Samson. God's Spirit came to him in the form of most unusual strength.

When Samson became a man, he travelled to a neighbouring town. There he met a young woman he wanted to marry. She was a Philistine. This displeased his parents very much. They expected him to marry a girl from his own family and nation.

But Samson was not to be deterred. So the marriage was arranged. At the marriage, Samson put a riddle to the Philistine guests. They could not guess the answer. Finally they forced the young wife to find out the answer. This angered Samson very much, and he returned to his own house. His wife was given to Samson's best friend.

When Samson returned, he found that his wife had been given to someone else. He was so angry that he went out and tied a torch between the tails of three hundred foxes. Then he let them into the fields of standing grain and into the olive groves. He had his revenge.

At a later date, Samson killed a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass. This was a mighty act, but it caused Samson to have to flee.

Then Samson visited a prostitute in Gaza. The Philistines waited outside all night to kill him. But at midnight Samson left, carrying the door posts he had pulled out of the ground.

Samson then fell in love with a woman named Delilah. She used every trick she knew to get him to tell her the secret of his great strength. Finally he grew tired of her begging, and he told her that if his hair was cut, he would lose his great strength.

After his hair was cut, Samson became very weak. He was brought as a prisoner to Gaza. There he was used as a donkey to grind grain. His hair began to grow again.

One day he was forced to come into the place where the Philistines were celebrating a festival to Dagon, their god. The Philistines made sport of Samson. When they allowed him to rest, he asked that he might lean against the pillars of the place.

Leaning against the pillars, he prayed that God would return his great strength. God did that and the defeated man took hold of the pillars. Pulling hard, Samson was able to pull the pillars of the pedestals. This caused the roof to fall with its load of three thousand men and women. Many, including Samson, died that day. That brings us to the end of Samson's life which is recorded in Judges 16:23-30.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Our lesson today is about a man who was very different from the man we studied last week. Both were judges of the Israelite nation. One served well. That was Gideon. One served poorly. That

was Samson, and it is he we will study this week."

Interpretation

Say: "To understand this study, we need to look at the whole life of Samson. I want us to divide into four groups. Each group will take one chapter to study and report briefly to the class what their chapter contained."

Now divide the group into four small groups. Each group will take one chapter (Judges 13, 14, 15, 16) and read it. They will choose a chairman who will lead their group. A reporter will take down what the group will tell the whole group.

After the students have divided into groups give them at least twenty minutes to do their work, then call them together again. Let the group that had Judges 13 report first. Then Judges 14 group will report and so on. This will take some time.

After the groups have reported, say: "Thank you for your good work. Samson was a strange judge, was he not?" Allow them to discuss this.

Say: "The reason the hair cutting was so important was that this was the last of the vows Samson had made to God that he had not broken. It is sad, indeed, when people break their vows."

Application To Our Lives

Ask: "Have any of you broken any vows to God? Are you leading the kinds of lives that God can honour? I believe that most of us are doing just that. God blesses us when we honour him in our lives. I will pray for you this week that your lives will be strong and good like Gideon's, not full of sin like Samson's."

Close the meeting with prayer.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

GIVE US A KING

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).

Teaching Aim: I would like my students to live a more obedient life to God.

Teaching Aids: Early in the week choose one of your students to read I Samuel 1 through 7. He will study his Bible and the student book. Ask him to be prepared at the next class meeting to tell the story of Samuel up to that point. Ask another student to study I Samuel 8:10 through 10. He will be prepared in the same way to tell what happens in those chapters.

PREPARING TO TEACH

Background Study

When Samuel became old, he did a foolish thing. He made his sons to be judges. Up to this point, God had chosen the judges.

In 1 Samuel 8:1-3, we find that his sons were not very good judges. They took bribes from people. They were corrupt. This was one of the greatest problems in that time. Read Amos 5:12; Isaiah 5:23 and following verses; Exodus 23:6,8 and Deuteronomy 16:19 to find out what God thought about this corruption.

It is little wonder then that "all the elders of Israel gathered together." They were disgusted with things as they were. The elders were, of course, the fathers in the families. They had control over their sons, their sons' wives and their sons' children. This is much like some families of today. It was right and proper that the elders come together to demand a new system of government.

In verse 6, we see that Samuel was displeased. But in the very next verse God commands him to listen to the people. It is interesting that it was Samuel who was not pleased. This faithful prophet had decided that God's will was the same as his will. He was assuming too much. Often people who have great responsibility in religious groups tend to feel that God cannot do his work in the world except through them. They seem to feel they can speak with authority and forget that it is only God who has real authority.

Samuel had this problem, but God told him to listen to the people. He told Samuel that the people had rejected him, God himself, and

not Samuel. God, then, asked Samuel to tell the people what the constitutional rights of a king were.

In I Samuel 10:1, Samuel anointed the new king, Saul. The act of anointing was to show that God's hand was upon Saul. The anointing may have been a custom the Israelites had brought with them out of Egypt. It was a sign, just as baptism is a sign that a Christian has accepted Jesus. The anointing was a sign that a man had become king.

TEACHING THIS LESSON

Introduction

Say: "Today we will hear from two of our students. They will help teach the lesson. In our lesson for today the people asked Samuel for a king. Most nations do not want a king. To have a king is to give up many personal rights. But Israel decided that was what they wanted to do."

Interpretation

Say: "I have asked _____ to come and tell us about the life of Samuel. He (or she) will begin with the birth and take us up to the time of today's lesson."

Give this person adequate time to tell this history. They may tell it as they like.

When they finish, say: "That brings us to our lesson for today. Let us open our Bibles and read 1 Samuel 8:1-9." Have these verses read.

Ask: "What mistake did Samuel make?"

Ask: "Why was this a mistake?" (God had chosen the other judges.)

Ask: "What did the two sons do that was wrong?"

Say: "Bribery and corruption were very common all through biblical history. God did not like bribery any more than the elders did. He used his prophets to speak out against corruption time and time again."

Ask: "What happened then?"

Ask: "Who were the elders? What rights did they have?"

Ask: "What was Samuel's response to their request?"

Ask: "Was this justified?"

Say: "Samuel felt that the elders were rejecting him. But they were not. Instead they were rejecting God and the form of government that God had given them. Often people in high religious positions

feel that they have the right to force people to believe the way they do. They appoint themselves as God's agents and they feel that God cannot do his will except through them. This was Samuel's error."

Ask: "What did God tell Samuel to do?"

After your discussion, say: "I have invited _____ to give us some more of the story. He (or she) will tell us what happened after God directed Samuel to tell the people what following a king would be like."

Give this person plenty of time to finish his narrative.

Thank both the students who helped today, and thank the students for participating in the discussion.

Application To Our Lives

Say: "In this book we have learned how Israel followed God for a time, then they left following him. They were very unfaithful. God, though, was very faithful. He never left the people completely. He always came back to see if they would return to him. This does not mean that he did not punish them because he did punish. But he tried to help them return to the covenant. God kept his promises."

Continue: "God wants to have a good relationship with everyone who has a covenant with him. He is always faithful. He will never leave us, even when we are unfaithful. If we ever feel that God is far away it is not because God has moved away. It is because we have moved away from God. God is faithful. Are we?"

Conclude the meeting with prayer.