
OUTSIDERS WHOM GOD CHOSE



ESL WORKBOOK
Student Edition

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Preface to The Outsiders Bible Study Series

It doesn't matter if you are old or young, disreputable, or a rebel. It doesn't matter where you are from or what your occupation is. God loves you and accepts you the way you are. God is happy to bless you and bless others through you just the same as He did in the past...

In some ways, we have been or still are outsiders to the cultural climate of our times. These stories represent all of us.

- Frances Gray, Roslyn Farmer, Marion Chang

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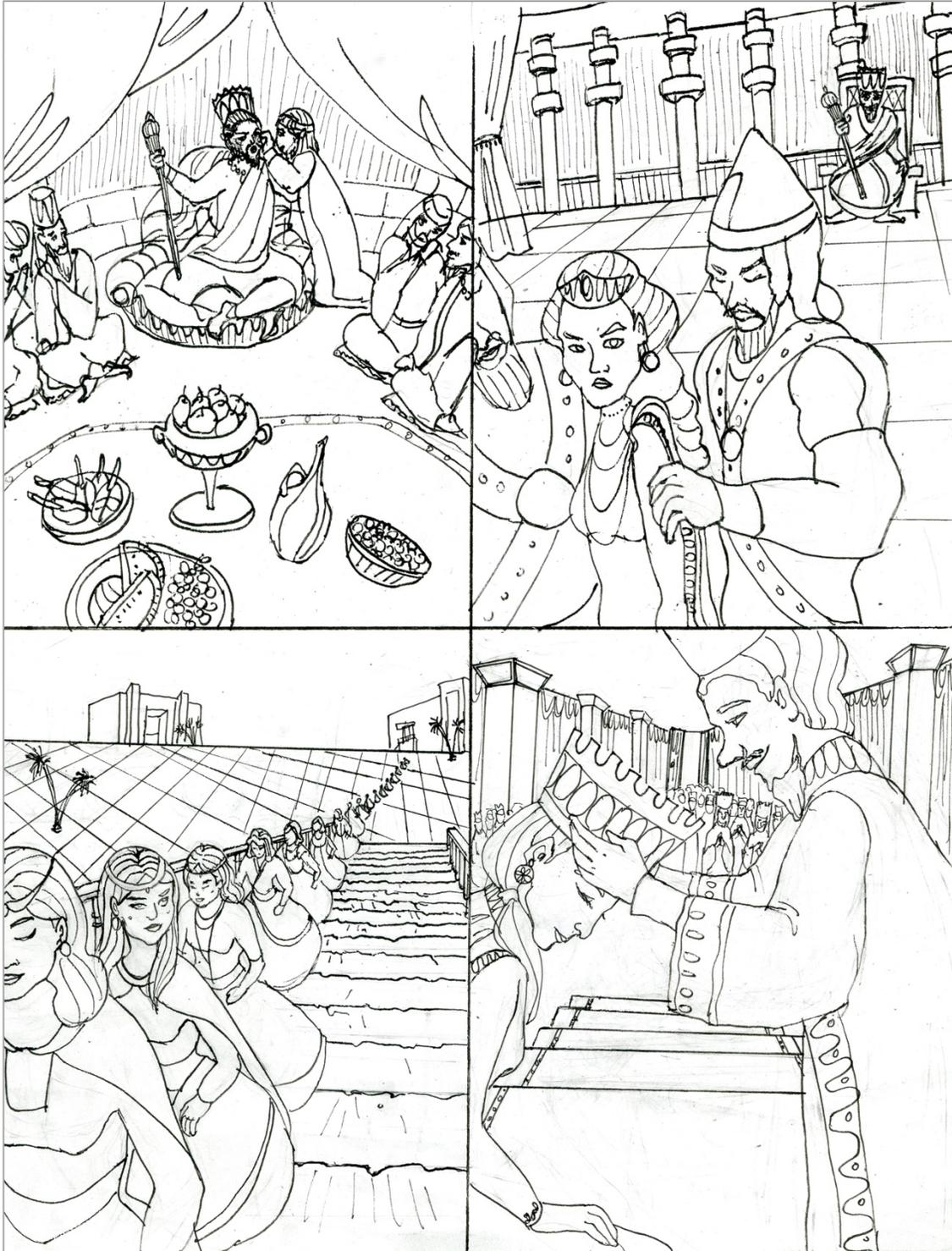
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Esther, Queen of Persia, Part One

Esther 1-2



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

The people of Judah had been **conquered** by the Babylonian army after they refused to listen to God. The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, and took most of its people into **exile**. After 70 years, the Persian Empire conquered the Babylonians. The Persian capital was in Susa. Susa still exists in southwest Iran. Mordecai was a Jewish exile living in Susa, and he was caring for a beautiful young cousin named Hadassah, whose parents had died. This story is about her.

Before you read:

1. What are some reasons that people might want to hide their identity?
2. In your culture, are wives expected to obey their husbands?

The Passage

Long ago, the Persian Empire ruled over the Middle East, from Africa to India.

Esther 1:¹⁻² King Xerxes of Persia... ruled one hundred twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia.³ During the third year of his rule, Xerxes gave a big dinner for all his officials and officers. The governors and leaders of the provinces were also invited, and even the commanders of the Persian and Median armies came.⁴ ...He **showed off** his wealth and spent a lot of money to **impress** his guests with the greatness of his kingdom.



⁵ King Xerxes soon gave another dinner and invited everyone in the city of Susa, no matter who they were. The eating and drinking lasted seven days in the beautiful palace gardens...⁷ The guests drank from gold cups, and each cup had a different design. The king was **generous**⁸ and said to them, "Drink all you want!"...⁹ While the men were enjoying themselves, Queen Vashti gave the women a big dinner inside the royal palace.

¹⁰ By the seventh day, King Xerxes was feeling happy because of so much wine. And he asked his seven personal servants...¹¹ to bring Queen Vashti to him. The king

wanted her to wear her crown and let his people and his officials see how beautiful she was.¹² The king's servants told Queen Vashti what he had said, but she **refused** to go to him, and this made him terribly angry.

¹³⁻¹⁴ The king called in the seven highest officials of Persia and Media...¹⁵ He said to them, "Queen Vashti refused to come to me when I sent my servants for her. What does the law say I should do about that?"...

One official replied, "¹⁷ The women in the kingdom will hear about this, and they will refuse to respect their husbands. They will say, 'If Queen Vashti doesn't obey her husband, why should we?...'¹⁹ Your Majesty, if you agree, you should write for the Medes and Persians a law that can never be changed. This law would keep Queen Vashti from ever seeing you again. Then you could let someone who respects you be queen in her place.

Esther 2: "¹After a while, King Xerxes got over being angry. But he kept thinking about what Vashti had done and the law that he had written because of her.² Then the king's personal servants said: 'Your Majesty, a search must be made to find you some beautiful young women.'³ You can select officers in every province to bring them to the place where you keep your wives in the capital city of Susa. Put your servant Hegai in charge of them since that is his job. He can see to it that they are given the proper beauty treatments.⁴ Then let the young woman who pleases you most take Vashti's place as queen...

King Xerxes took this advice, and Hadassah was one of the young women brought to the palace. Her Jewish name was changed to 'Esther', after the Babylonian goddess of love. Esther waited for her turn when the king would call for her to spend the night with him.

...Hegai was put in charge of all the women,⁹ and from the first day, Esther was his favorite. He began her beauty treatments at once. He also gave her plenty of food and seven special **maids** from the king's palace, and they had the best rooms.

¹⁰ Mordecai had warned Esther not to tell anyone that she was a Jew, and she obeyed him.¹¹ He was anxious to see how Esther was getting along and to learn what had happened to her. So each day he would walk back and forth in front of the court where the women lived...

¹⁵⁻¹⁶ Xerxes had been king for seven years when Esther's turn came to go to him Everyone liked Esther...Esther trusted Hegai and asked him what she ought to take with her.

¹⁷ Xerxes liked Esther more than he did any of the other young women. None of them pleased him as much as she did, and right away he fell in love with her and crowned her queen in place of Vashti. ¹⁸ In honor of Esther he gave a big dinner for his leaders and officials. Then he declared a holiday everywhere in his kingdom and gave expensive gifts.

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescriptures.com

Passage Questions

Change these sentences to be True:

1. Xerxes was a Babylonian king.

2. The Persian Empire only controlled Persian people.

3. Xerxes was thinking clearly when he ordered Vashti to join his party.

4. Hadassah asked to go to the palace.

5. Esther told Xerxes that she was Jewish.

Circle the letter for the word or phrase that best defines the underlined word in the sentence.

1. Hegai gave Esther seven maids to help her look beautiful:
 - a. make-up
 - b. female servants
2. The king was very generous with food and wine:
 - a. giving
 - b. careful with money
3. King Xerxes wanted to impress all the guests with his money and power:
 - a. make someone feel wonder
 - b. make someone feel uncomfortable
4. The Jews were in exile because they were not allowed to return to their country:
 - a. favour
 - b. forced away from home
5. But queen Vashti refused to come:
 - a. will not do something
 - b. will do something
6. Hadassah changed her name to Esther so she could hide her identity:
 - a. who she was
 - b. what she liked
7. This empire had conquered the Jewish land
 - a. bought with money
 - b. took control of
8. King Xerxes wanted to show off his beautiful wife, Vashti
 - a. make others feel happy
 - b. make others feel jealous

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. How large was the Persian Empire?
2. Who was Xerxes?
3. Who was Vashti?

4. Why did Xerxes ask Vashti to come to his party?
5. What did the nobles tell Xerxes to do? Why did they want him to do this?
6. Why was Xerxes angry with Vashti?
7. Do you think Vashti was right to refuse to obey Xerxes?
8. What was the difference between Jewish and Persian religions? How would this affect the choice of a Jewish queen of Persia?
9. Was Xerxes happy with Esther? How do you know?
10. Do you think Esther was happy to become the queen of Persia?

- *Intermediate*

1. How large was the Persian Empire?
2. What did you learn about the king's parties in this story?
3. Was Vashti right to refuse to come to Xerxes' party?
4. Was Xerxes wise to divorce Vashti? Why or why not?
5. Why did Esther enter the palace "beauty contest"?
6. What were the differences between the Jewish and the Persian religions? Why would Mordecai have asked Esther to not tell Xerxes her nationality?
7. Do you think that Esther was happy? Why or why not?
8. The Persians conquered and extended the Babylonian Empire. Why would nations want to become empires, ruling over such a large region?

- *Challenging*

1. What are some of the other empires that have been in the world?
2. The Persians conquered and extended the Babylonian Empire. Why would nations want to become empires, ruling over such a large region?
3. Is it good for kings to drink from gold cups? Why or why not?
4. What did you learn about king Xerxes from this story?
5. Was Vashti right to refuse to go to the party? Why or why not?
6. What differences were there between the Jewish and the Persian gods? Why would Mordecai tell Esther to not tell anyone her nationality?
7. All the beautiful women gathered to the palace went into Xerxes' harem. How do you think Esther felt about this?
8. Do you think Esther was happy with Xerxes? Why or why not?
9. When the Persians conquered the Babylonians, they allowed all the Babylonian exiles to return home. About 50,000 Judahites returned to rebuild Judah. Nehemiah, Ezra, and Zerubbabel rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple. Why did so many, like Mordecai and Esther decide to stay in Persia?

Esther, Queen of Persia, part two

Esther 3 -9



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

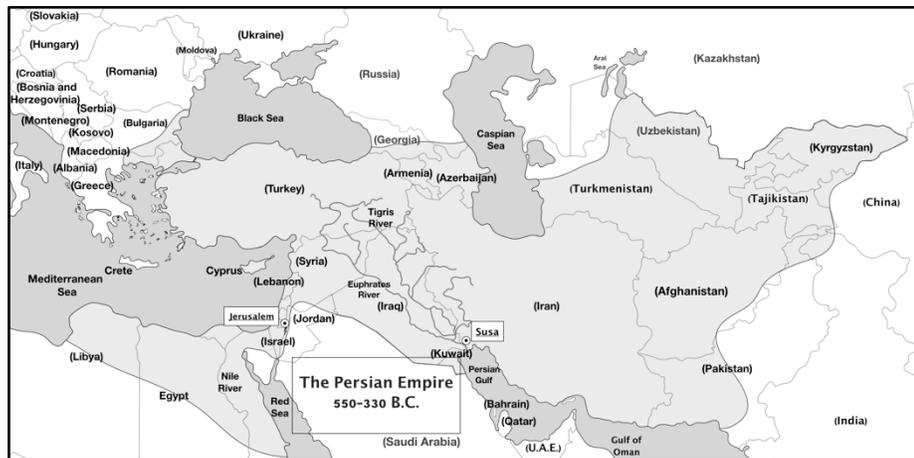
King Xerxes of the Persian Empire had made Haman the top official in his empire. Haman was an Amalekite, and they were old enemies of the Jews. Xerxes had also made Hadassah, a Jewish girl, his queen. But Xerxes and the other people of the capital did not know she was Jewish. They knew her only by her Persian name, Esther. Esther's cousin, Mordecai, was an official in Xerxes' palace.

Before you read:

1. Have you ever wanted to hide the truth from someone?
2. Have you ever saved someone's life?

The Passage

3: ...¹King Xerxes ... had given orders for his officials at the royal gate to honour Haman by kneeling down to him. All of them obeyed except Mordecai. ³ When the other officials asked Mordecai why he disobeyed the king's command, ⁴ he said, "Because I am a Jew." ... Finally, they reported this to Haman, to find out if he would let Mordecai **get away with** it...



⁸ Then Haman went to the king and said:

"Your Majesty, there are some people who live all over your kingdom and won't have a thing to do with anyone else. They have customs that are different from everyone else's, and they refuse to obey your laws...⁹ Why not give orders for all of them to be killed? I can promise that you will get tons of silver for your **treasury**."

¹⁰ The king handed his official ring to Haman, who hated the Jews, and the king told him, ¹¹ "Do what you want with those people! You can keep their money."

¹² ...Haman called in the king's secretaries and ordered them to write letters in every language used in the kingdom...¹³ The letters were taken by messengers to every part

of the kingdom.. *The letters said*, "On the thirteenth day of Adar, the twelfth month, all Jewish men, women, and children are to be killed..."

4: ¹When Mordecai heard about the letter, he tore his clothes in **sorrow** and put on **sackcloth**. Then he covered his head with **ashes** and went through the city, crying and weeping....

Esther sent a servant to Mordecai to find out why he was acting that way. He sent a message to her explaining about the king's order, and he begged her to go and speak to the king. She sent a message back, "Tell Mordecai ¹¹ there is a law about going in to see the king... Anyone who goes in to see the king without being invited by him will be put to death. The only way that anyone can be saved is for the king to hold out the gold **sceptre** to that person. And it's been thirty days since he has asked for me."...

Mordecai replied to her, "Don't think that you will escape being killed with the rest of the Jews, just because you live in the king's palace. ¹⁴ If you don't speak up now, we will somehow get help, but you and your family will be killed. It could be that you were made queen for a time like this!"

¹⁵ Esther sent a message to Mordecai, saying, ¹⁶ "Bring together all the Jews in Susa and tell them to go without eating **for my sake!** Don't eat or drink for three days and nights. My servant girls and I will do the same. Then I will go in to see the king, even if it means I must die."...

5: ¹Three days later, Esther dressed in her royal robes and went to the inner court of the palace in front of the throne. The king ... ² was happy to see Esther, and he held out the gold sceptre to her.

*Even though the king promised to give Queen Esther whatever she wanted, she did not tell him right away. Instead she twice invited him and Haman to a private banquet. Haman was a happy man! He **boasted** to his family and friends about how the queen had honoured him.*

7: ¹The king and Haman were dining with Esther ² and drinking wine during the second dinner, when the king again said, "Esther, what can I do for you? Just ask, and I will give you as much as half of my kingdom!"

³ Esther answered, "Your Majesty, if you really care for me and are willing to help, you can save me and my people. That's what I really want, ⁴ because a reward has been promised to anyone who kills my people..."

⁵ "Who would dare to do such a thing?" the king asked.

⁶ Esther replied, "That evil Haman is the one out to get us!"

Xerxes was filled with anger and went out into the garden. Haman was terrified and threw himself on Esther to beg for his life. Just then King Xerxes returned and exclaimed, "Would you molest the Queen?!" Xerxes had Haman killed that night. Xerxes gave Mordecai Haman's job, and he gave Mordecai the power to make a new law that allowed Jews throughout the empire to defend themselves from their enemies. The Jewish people were saved.

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescrptures.com

Passage Questions

Put the story in the right order. The first one is done for you:

1. _____ Xerxes had Haman killed for planning to kill Esther's people.
2. _____ Xerxes extended the gold sceptre to Esther.
3. _____ Haman went to the King and made a law to have all Jews killed.
4. 1 Mordecai would not show honour to Haman.
5. _____ Esther agreed to speak to the king, even though she could be killed.
6. _____ Esther invited Haman to both of her banquets.
7. _____ Mordecai showed great sorrow by wearing sackcloth and putting ashes on his head.

Circle the letter for the word or phrase that best defines the underlined word in the sentence.

1. Haman was not going to allow Mordechai to get away with dishonouring him.
 - a. continue
 - b. escape punishment

2. Haman promised to put lots of silver into the king's treasury.
 - a. bank
 - b. palace
3. Mordecai was filled with sorrow when he heard the order to kill all his people.
 - a. deep sadness
 - b. worry
4. Mordecai wore sackcloth to show how he felt:
 - a. clothing for seeing the king
 - b. clothing for a funeral
5. Mordecai put ashes on his head:
 - a. perfume
 - b. leftover material after a fire
6. The king held out his sceptre to Esther:
 - a. a stick showing authority
 - b. a walking stick
7. He boasted to his family and friends
 - a. to dance with great energy
 - b. to tell others how impressive you are
8. Esther asked all Jews in Susa to pray and go without food for her sake:
 - a. for her best interests
 - b. for her beauty

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. How did the other officials show respect for Haman?
2. Why did Haman not like Mordecai?
3. What lie did Haman tell to King Xerxes? Was anything true that he said?
4. How did Mordecai show his feelings about the order to kill his people?
5. How did Mordecai and Esther communicate with each other?
6. Why did Esther want people to go without eating before she went to the king?
7. What did the king do when Esther went to the court uninvited?

8. Why did Esther ask the king and Haman to her banquet?

9. What happened to Mordecai?

- *Intermediate*

1. How did Haman respond to Mordecai's refusal to bow? Why did Haman do this?

2. How much truth was Haman telling when he asked the king to get rid of a whole culture and people?

3. Was Esther sure that Xerxes loved her? Why or why not?

4. Why might Esther have invited Xerxes and Haman to two banquets before telling Xerxes her request?

5. What did you learn about Haman's character from this story?

6. What did you learn about Esther's character? Do you think Esther was made queen for this time?

7. Esther 6: 1 - 3 tells a story of the night before Haman planned to go to King Xerxes to ask him to kill all the Jews. It happened that night that King Xerxes could not sleep. So, he had a servant read him the records of what had happened since he had been king. The servant happened to read a story of two men who had once planned to kill Xerxes, but Mordecai had stopped them. When Xerxes learned that Mordecai had not been given a reward for this, he called in Haman the next morning. Xerxes asked Haman what should be done for someone the king wanted to honor. Haman thought Xerxes was wanting to honour him. So Haman told Xerxes to dress the man in the king's clothes, put him on the king's horse, and have a high official lead him around the city and publicly praise him. Xerxes thought this was a great idea and told Haman to go do this for Mordecai.

a. What other 'coincidences' about timing are in this story?

b. Do you think things can happen by coincidence? Why or why not?

8. Was Xerxes a good king? Why or why not?
9. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah told the Jews that Judah would be conquered by the Babylonian Empire because they rejected God. The prophets also said that Babylonian Empire would come to an end and the Jews would return to their land. Jeremiah told them when this would happen. Isaiah told them the name of Cyrus (the Persian king) who would set them free.
 - a. Why did the Jews not listen to the prophets?
 - b. Why did God still protect the Jews?
10. This story does not mention God. So why did the early church include it in the Bible?

- *Challenging*

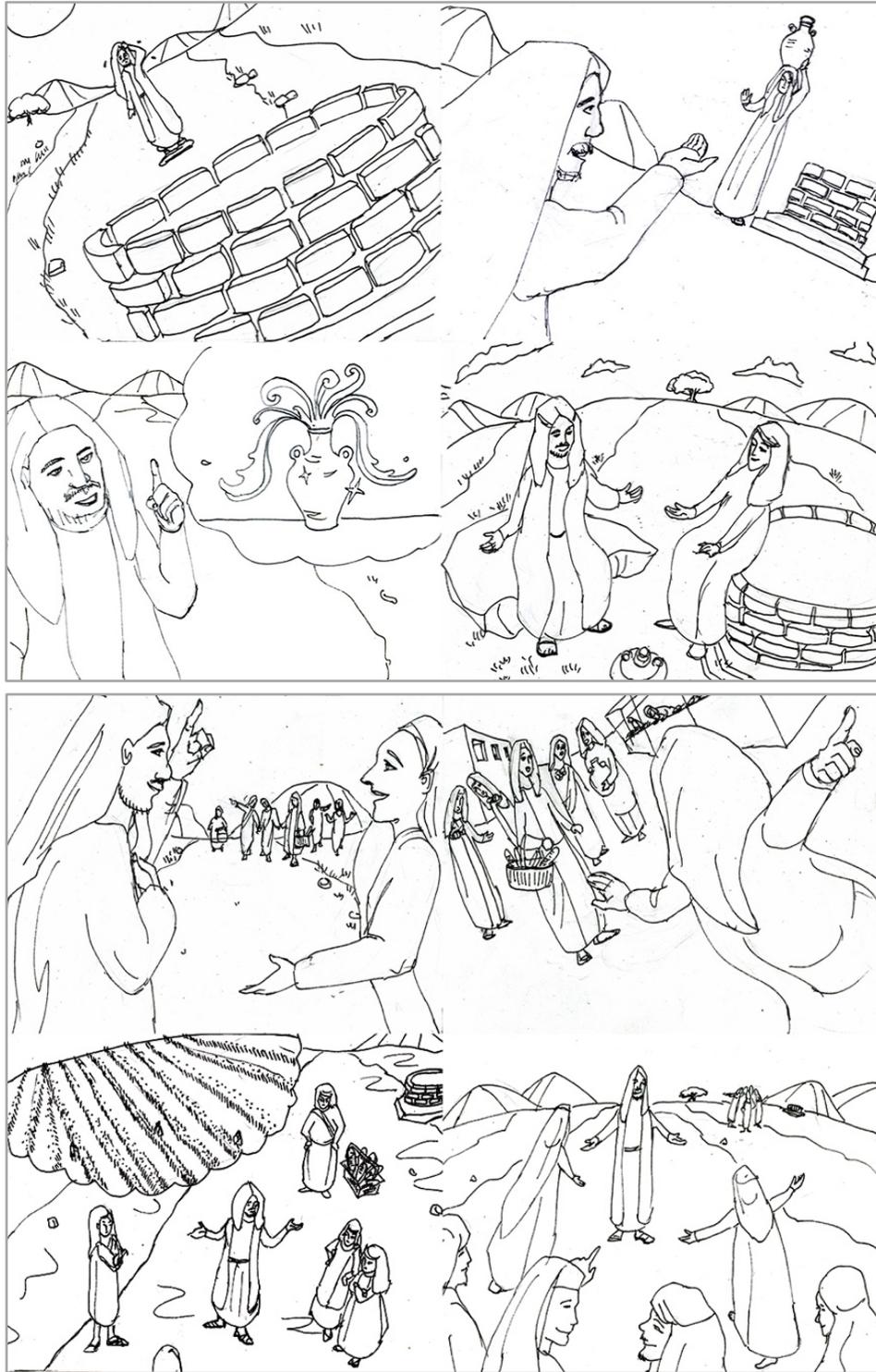
1. Why might Mordecai have refused to do show respect to Haman?
2. How much truth was Haman telling when he asked the king to get rid of a whole culture and people?
3. Why would Haman have chosen one specific day to kill all the Jews, rather than have this plan extend over several weeks or months?
4. What reasons might Esther have had for choosing to invite Xerxes and Haman to two banquets before telling Xerxes her request?
5. Haman had the highest position an official could have. So why would he be so upset by just one official refusing to honour him?
6. Was Xerxes a good king? Why or why not?
7. Do you think that Esther was made queen for "such a time as this"? Or do you think it was coincidence? Explain your answer.
8. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah told the Jews that Judah would be conquered by the Babylonian Empire and exile them - and that 70 years later the Babylonian Empire would be conquered, and the Jews would return to their

land. Jeremiah told them when this would happen because of their disobedience. Isaiah told them the name of Cyrus (the Persian King) who would set them free from Babylon. They wrote this 150 years before it happened.

- a. Why did the Jews not listen to their prophets?
 - b. Why did God still protect the Jews?
 - c. There are many prophecies in the Bible about the "end times". Do we pay attention to those prophecies? Why or why not?
9. This story does not mention God, so why did the early church include it in the Bible?

The Woman at the Well

John 4:1-42



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

Samaria had once been the northern part of ancient Israel. But in the past the Assyrians had conquered it and carried away most of its people. They then brought many other people from far away nations to live there. Later those people oppressed the Jews of southern Israel. These people were called the Samaritans. In time the Samaritans added the worship of the God of Israel to the worship of their other gods. The Jewish people did not like the Samaritans. Some Jewish people avoided traveling through Samaria, even though it took longer. It was the custom at that time for women to get water every morning when it was still cool. It was a time when they could visit with their friends as they worked. This story happened at the well of Jacob, an ancestor of both the Jews and Samaritans.*

Before you read:

1. What gives a woman a 'bad name' in your culture? How is she treated by the other women in the community?

The Passage: John 4: 5-42

Jesus and his disciples were travelling through Samaria. ⁵...On his way he came to the town of Sychar... ⁶⁻⁸ The well that Jacob had dug was still there, and Jesus sat down beside it because he was tired from traveling. It was noon, and after Jesus' disciples had gone into town to buy some food, a Samaritan woman came to **draw** water from the well.

Jesus asked her, "Would you please give me a drink of water?"

⁹ "You are a Jew," she replied, "and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink of water when Jews and Samaritans won't have anything to do with each other?"



¹⁰ Jesus answered, "You don't know what God wants to give you, and you don't know who is asking you for a drink. If you did, you would ask me for the water that gives life."

¹¹ "Sir," the woman said, "you don't even have a **bucket**, and the well is deep. Where are you going to get this life-giving water?"

¹³ Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again. ¹⁴ But no one who drinks the water I give will ever be thirsty again. The water I give is like a **flowing fountain** that gives eternal life."

¹⁵ The woman replied, "Sir, please give me a drink of that water! Then I won't get thirsty and have to come to this well again."

¹⁶ Jesus told her, "Go and bring your husband."

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ The woman answered, "I don't have a husband."

"That's right," Jesus replied, "you're telling the truth. You don't have a husband. You have already been married five times, and the man you are now living with isn't your husband."... ²² You Samaritans don't really know the one you worship. But we Jews do know the God we worship, and by using us, God will save the world... ²⁴ God is Spirit, and those who worship God must be led by the Spirit to worship him according to the truth."

²⁵ The woman said, "I know that the Messiah will come. He is the one we call Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

²⁶ "I am that one," Jesus told her, "and I am speaking to you now."...

²⁸ The woman left her water jar and ran back into town. She said to the people, ²⁹ "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! Could he be the Messiah?" ³⁰ Everyone in town went out to see Jesus... ⁴⁰ They came and asked him to stay in their town, and he stayed on for two days.

⁴¹ Many more Samaritans **put their faith in** Jesus because of what they heard him say. ⁴² They told the woman, "We no longer have faith in Jesus just because of what you told us. We have heard him ourselves, and we are certain that he is the Saviour of the world!"

* The Assyrians had left behind some of the people from the northern Kingdom of Israel. These Israelites themselves had been idol worshippers, and they freely intermarried with the pagan foreigners. And so, the Samaritans could say they had Jacob as their ancestor.

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescritures.com

Passage Questions

True or False

1. Jesus' disciples went to the town looking for water. _____
2. Jesus hated Samaritans. _____
3. The Samaritan woman had lots of friends. _____
4. Jesus talked to the woman about living forever. _____
5. The Samaritan woman had been married. _____
6. The woman knew some things about God. _____
7. The people of the town believed Jesus was the Messiah. _____

Match the following words with their meanings. Write the correct letter on the line.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| ____ 1. a well | a. moving (liquid) |
| ____ 2. to draw | b. a father, grandfather, great grandmother... |
| ____ 3. flowing | c. to get water from a place |
| ____ 4. ancestor | d. believed |
| ____ 5. put their faith in | e. water coming up from the ground |
| ____ 6. fountain | f. a hole in the ground with water |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. My mother's grandfather is also my _____.
2. The woman had come to the well _____ the water.
3. The people of Sychar _____ Jesus because they believed he was the Messiah.

4. Jesus talked about a _____ of _____ water.
5. When Jesus first came to Sychar, He sat near the _____.

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. Where was Jesus in this story?
2. What did Jesus and the woman talk about?
3. What was special about the water Jesus talked about?
4. Who did Jesus say He was? Why is that important?
5. What did the woman do after talking to Jesus?
6. What did Jesus say about how God wanted people to worship Him?
7. Why did the woman at the well believe Jesus was the Messiah?
8. Why did the Samaritans in her city ask Jesus to stay with them?
9. Jews and Samaritans did not like each other. Why, then, did the disciples stay with Jesus in the Samaritan town of Sychar?

- *Intermediate*

1. What country was Jesus travelling through on His way home?
2. What do you think was unusual about meeting the woman at the well? Why was the woman surprised that Jesus was there?
3. In John 4: 20 the woman says, "My ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say Jerusalem is the only place to worship." She knows the Jews worship differently. Why is this important to the story?
4. What was special about the water Jesus talked about?

5. What made the woman think that Jesus could be the Messiah?
6. What did Jesus mean when he said that God was seeking worshipers led by the Spirit to worship according to truth?
7. What reasons did the villagers give for why they came to have faith in Jesus?
8. The Samaritan woman asked Jesus whether the Samaritans were right in worshipping on their mountain.
 - a) What does this tell you about the woman?
 - b) Jesus told her that the Samaritans did not know God, and that salvation was from the Jews (who the Samaritans disliked and persecuted). Why did this not offend her?

- *Challenging*

1. Which country was Jesus travelling through on his way home? Since the Samaritans and the Jews disliked each other, why didn't Jesus avoid going there?
2. Why was the time of day for meeting the woman significant?
3. What issues did Jesus bring up with the woman?
4. What made the woman think that Jesus could be the Messiah?
5. What influenced the villagers to come and see Jesus?
6. What is the significance of living water?
7. What did Jesus mean when he said that God was seeking worshipers led by the Spirit to worship according to truth?
8. The woman brought up the issue of where the Samaritans worshipped and where the Jews worshipped. Jesus told her the Samaritans did not know God. He also told her that salvation was from their enemies, the Jews. Yet the woman was not offended by this. Why not? What does this tell you about her?

Ruth, the Gleaner, Part One

Ruth: 1-2



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

This story happened around 1140 B.C. before Israel had a king. The 12 tribes of Israel each had their own land and were united as a **confederation**. They had God's laws, and one law said that when they harvested a grain field, they must not cut to the edges of the field or gather up grain that had been dropped or left behind.

This grain was for the poor and the foreigners.

This was not a peaceful time. Moab sometimes attacked the Israelites. But, because of a **famine**, an Israelite man called Elimelech moved with his wife, Naomi, and their two sons to the land of Moab. Both sons married Moabite women, they were named Orpah and Ruth. But then, Elimelech and both his sons died in Moab, leaving Naomi a poor **widow**. This is where our story begins.

Before you read:

1. What is the relationship like in your country between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law?

The Passage

Ruth 1: 6 - 2: 20

⁶⁻⁷ When Naomi heard that the LORD had given his people a good **harvest**, she and her two daughters-in-law got ready to leave Moab and go to Judah. As they were on their way there, ⁸ Naomi said to them, "Don't you want to go back home to your own mothers? You were kind to my husband and sons, and you have always been kind to me. I pray that the LORD will be just as kind to you. ⁹ May he give each of you another husband and a home of your own."...

Both daughters-in-law said they wanted to stay with Naomi, but after many tears, Orpah returned to her mother's home. ¹⁵ Naomi then said to Ruth, "Look, your sister-in-law is going back to her people and to her gods! Why don't you go with her?"

¹⁶ Ruth answered, "Please don't tell me to leave you and return home! I will go where you go, I will live where you live; your people will be my people, your God will be my God. ¹⁷ I will die where you die and be **buried** beside you. May the LORD punish me if we are ever separated, even by death!"...

When they reached Naomi's home town of Bethlehem, she told her old friends, ²⁰ ... "Don't call me Naomi any longer! Call me Mara (*bitter*), because God has made my life bitter. ²¹ I had everything when I left, but the LORD has brought me back with

nothing. How can you still call me Naomi, when God has turned against me and made my life so hard?"

²² The **barley** harvest was just beginning when Naomi and Ruth, her Moabite daughter-in-law, arrived in Bethlehem. 2: ¹⁻³ One day, Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me see if I can find someone who will let me pick up the grain left in the fields by the harvest workers."

Naomi answered, "Go ahead, my daughter." So right away, Ruth went out to pick up grain in a field owned by Boaz. He was a relative of Naomi's husband, as well as a rich and important man...

Ruth worked very hard, and Boaz noticed Ruth. He asked who this newcomer was, and his harvesters told him her story.



⁸ Boaz went over to Ruth and said, "I think it would be best for you not to pick up grain in anyone else's field. Stay here with the women ⁹ and follow along behind them, as they gather up what the men have cut. I have warned the men not to bother you, and whenever you are thirsty, you can drink from the water jars they have filled."

¹⁰ Ruth bowed down to the ground and said, "You know I come from another country. Why are you so good to me?"

¹¹ Boaz answered, "I've heard how you've helped your mother-in-law ever since your husband died. You even left your own father and mother to come and live in a foreign land among people you don't know. ¹² I pray that the LORD God of Israel will **reward** you for what you have done. And now that you have come to him for protection, I pray that he will bless you."...

¹⁷ Ruth worked in the field until evening... ¹⁸ She took the grain to town and showed Naomi how much she had picked up. Ruth also gave her the food left over from her lunch. ¹⁹ Naomi said, "Where did you work today? Whose field was it? God bless the man who treated you so well!" Then Ruth told her that she had worked in the field of a man named Boaz.

²⁰ "The LORD bless Boaz!" Naomi replied. "He has shown that he is still **loyal** to the living and to the dead. Boaz is a close relative, one of those who is supposed to look after us."

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescriptures.com

Passage Questions

Match the beginning with the correct ending. The first is done for you.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <u>_d_</u> 1. Israelites disliked Moab because | a. Naomi's husband. |
| ___ 2. Orpah and Ruth married | b. that, "your God will be my God." |
| ___ 3. Naomi thought that God | c. to get food for herself and Naomi |
| ___ 4. Ruth told Naomi | d. Moabites attacked them sometimes. |
| ___ 5. Boaz was a relative of | e. would reward Ruth for her kindness |
| ___ 6. Ruth went into the field | f. Naomi's two sons. |
| ___ 7. Boaz prayed that God | g. had turned against her. |

Circle the letter for the word or phrase that best defines the underlined word in the sentence.

1. There the 12 tribes established a confederation.
 - a. a group of people united for a purpose
 - b. people who are not united
 - c. government with a king
2. Because of a famine, the man moved to Moab.
 - a. a war
 - b. not enough food
 - c. high rent prices

3. The man died, leaving Naomi a poor widow.
 - a. a woman with no home
 - b. a woman with no food
 - c. a woman whose husband is dead
4. The LORD had given his people a good harvest.
 - a. grain ready for cutting
 - b. weather
 - c. money
5. The barley harvest was just beginning.
 - a. vegetable
 - b. a kind of grain
 - c. fruit
6. I pray the LORD will reward you for what you have done.
 - a. punish
 - b. help
 - c. give good things
7. He has shown that he is still loyal to the living and to the dead.
 - a. angry
 - b. forgetful
 - c. faithful
8. I will die where you die and be buried beside you.
 - a. put under the ground
 - b. living
 - c. happy

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. How many people were in Naomi's family when they went to Moab?
2. What happened to Naomi's family in Moab?
3. Why did Naomi tell her daughters-in-law to return to their own mothers?
4. Why do you think Ruth stayed with Naomi?

5. Where did Naomi and Ruth move to? Why would Ruth be an outsider there?
6. What had God told the Israelites to do when they harvested a field? What does this tell you about God? About the Israelites?
7. Ruth looked for work in the harvest field. What does this tell you about her?
8. Who was Boaz?
9. How did Boaz treat Ruth?
10. How would the end of the harvest be a problem for Naomi and Ruth?

- *Intermediate*

1. Why did Naomi's family go to Moab?
2. Compare Orpah and Ruth.
3. "Naomi" means 'Pleasant' in Hebrew. Why did Naomi tell her friends to rename her, "Bitter"? How do you think she may have felt about God?
4. Why did Naomi tell her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab?
5. What does the Israelite law regarding harvesting a field tell you about their God? About Boaz?
6. Compare the life of Boaz and Naomi.
7. What work did Ruth do? Why did Ruth take on this work?
8. How did Boaz show compassion for Ruth?
9. What would the end of the harvest mean for Ruth and Naomi?

- *Challenging*

1. How did Naomi show compassion for her daughters-in-law?
2. Was Orpah wrong to return to her family? Was she wise?
3. If you had been Ruth, would you have found it easy to move to Bethlehem?
4. Was Elimelech's decision to move to Moab a wise one?
5. "Naomi" means 'Pleasant' in Hebrew. Why did Naomi tell her friends to rename her, "Bitter"? How do you think she may have felt about God?
6. What does the Israelite law regarding harvesting a field tell you about their God? About Boaz?
7. Would Boaz be a good husband for Ruth? Why or why not?
8. Compare the lives of Boaz and Naomi.
9. Compare the lives of Boaz and Ruth.
10. What did the end of harvest mean for Boaz? For Ruth and Naomi? What makes you think that this might not be the end of the story?

Ruth, the Gleaner, Part Two

Ruth: 3-4



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

According to the laws written by Moses, an Israelite man had the responsibility to rescue a relative who was in need. The word "kinsman" means a male relative; the word "redeemer" means someone who rescues or saves someone. A single man, acting in the role of kinsman-redeemer, could rescue a poor widow by marrying her. Their children would inherit the land of her late husband. It was also proper for a widow at that time to ask a male relative to act as a kinsman-redeemer by marrying her.

In the last lesson, two poor widows, Naomi, and her daughter-in-law, Ruth, had returned to Naomi's hometown of Bethlehem after living in Moab. Ruth left her people in Moab to be with Naomi and take care of her. Ruth also left her gods and chose the God of Israel. Ruth had been working in the fields of a rich man named Boaz, an unmarried kinsman of Naomi's late husband, Elimelech. Though Ruth was a Moabite, Boaz had treated her kindly.



Before you read:

1. What happened to widows in your culture a long time ago?

The Passage

Ruth 3: ¹One day, Naomi said to Ruth, "It's time I found you a husband, who will give you a home and take care of you. ²You have been picking up grain alongside the women who work for Boaz, and you know he is a relative of ours. Tonight he will be **threshing** the grain. ³Now take a bath and put on some **perfume**, then dress in your best clothes. Go where he is working, but don't let him see you until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴Watch where he goes to spend the night, then when he is asleep, lift the cover and lie down at his feet. He will tell you what to do.

⁵Ruth answered, "I'll do whatever you say." ⁶She went out to the place where Boaz was working and did what Naomi had told her.

⁷ After Boaz finished eating and drinking and was feeling happy, he went over and fell asleep near the pile of grain. Ruth **slipped** over quietly. She lifted the cover and lay down near his feet. ⁸ In the middle of the night, Boaz suddenly woke up and was **shocked** to see a woman lying at his feet. ⁹ "Who are you?" he asked.

"Sir, I am Ruth," she answered, "and you are the relative who is supposed to take care of me. So spread the edge of your cover over me."

¹⁰ Boaz replied, "The LORD bless you! This shows how truly loyal you are to your family. You could have looked for a younger man, either rich or poor, but you didn't.

¹¹ Don't worry, I'll do what you have asked. You are **respected** by everyone in town.

¹² It's true that I am one of the relatives who is supposed to take care of you, but there is someone who is an even closer relative. ¹³ Stay here until morning, then I will find out if he is willing to look after you." ... ¹⁴ Ruth lay down again, but she got up before daylight, because Boaz did not want anyone to know she had been there.

That morning Boaz went to the town square. There he asked the younger male relative to tell the town leaders and people whether he wanted to act as the kinsman-redeemer and redeem the land from Naomi.

The man replied, "I will buy it!"

⁵ "If you do buy it from Naomi," Boaz told him, "you must also marry Ruth. Then if you have a son by her, the property will stay in the family of Ruth's first husband."

⁶ The man answered, "If that's the case, I don't want to buy it! That would make problems with the property I already own. You may buy it yourself..."

¹³ Boaz married Ruth, and the LORD blessed her with a son. ¹⁴ After his birth, the women said to Naomi:

Praise the LORD! Today he has given you a grandson to take care of you. We pray that the boy will grow up to be **famous** everywhere in Israel. ¹⁵ He will make you happy and take care of you in your old age, because he is the son of your daughter-in-law. And she loves you more than seven sons of your own would love you.

¹⁶ Naomi loved the boy and took good care of him. ¹⁷ The neighborhood women named him Obed, but they called him "Naomi's Boy." When Obed grew up he had a son named Jesse, who later became the father of King David.

The prophets said that the Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel, would come from King David's family. Jesus was called, "Son of David", because King David was his ancestor.

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescriptures.com

Passage Questions

Change the False sentences to True:

1. A redeemer is someone who buys and sells land.

2. A kinsman-redeemer had to marry a widow from a different family.

3. Ruth was a proud woman.

4. Naomi thought Ruth should never marry again.

5. Boaz didn't want to marry Ruth.

6. David was Boaz and Ruth's son.

Circle the letter for the word or phrase that best defines the underlined word in the sentence.

1. Naomi's late husband, Elimelech
 - a. old
 - b. good
 - c. dead
2. Tonight he will be threshing the grain.
 - a. separating the grain from its husks (shells)
 - b. eating the grain

- c. cooking the grain
3. Now take a bath and put on some perfume.
 - a. jewelry
 - b. oil that smells good
 - c. shoes
 4. Ruth slipped over quietly.
 - a. crawled
 - b. sneaked
 - c. ran
 5. King David was Jesus' ancestor.
 - a. neighbour
 - b. teacher
 - c. forefather
 6. The boy will grow up to be famous everywhere in Israel.
 - a. well known
 - b. powerful
 - c. rich
 7. You are respected by everyone in the town.
 - a. judged good
 - b. disliked
 - c. remembered
 8. Boaz was shocked to see a woman at his feet.
 - a. angry
 - b. happy
 - c. very surprised

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. What was a kinsman? A redeemer? A kinsman redeemer?
2. What should a kinsman redeemer do?
3. What did Naomi want Ruth to do? Why would she want her to do this at night?
4. Why was Boaz surprised by Ruth's request for him to marry her?

5. Why did Boaz want Ruth to leave before morning?
6. Why did Boaz go to the town square?
7. Why did the closer relative not want to marry Ruth?
8. How did the people of Bethlehem feel about the marriage of Ruth and Boaz? How do you know this?
9. Why might God have chosen Ruth to be an ancestor of Jesus?

- *Intermediate*

1. What was a kinsman redeemer? Why would the Israelites have this as part of their customs?
2. Why was Boaz surprised by Ruth's request?
3. Why did Boaz ask Ruth to leave before anyone saw her?
4. Why did Boaz go to the town square?
5. Why didn't the closer kinsman in the tribe want to redeem the land?
6. Were the people in Bethlehem happy about the marriage? How do you know this?
7. Had Naomi expected Ruth to be so accepted by the people of Bethlehem? Why or why not?
8. Why might God have chosen Ruth to be an ancestor of Jesus?
9. How did God change Naomi's bitter life?

- *Challenging*

1. What would life have been like for Ruth if Boaz had not married her?

2. Why did Ruth ask Boaz at night, rather than during the day?
3. Do you think that Boaz loved Ruth? Why do you say that?
4. Why didn't Boaz recognize Ruth when he woke up?
5. Why would the villagers cheer Ruth and Boaz's marriage? Do you think Naomi was surprised by this? Why had she so misjudged her people when she urged her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab?
6. In the Old Testament, God is Israel's Redeemer, the one who saves and defends Israel. In the New Testament, Jesus is called our Kinsman-Redeemer. Why do you think He has that name?
7. Romans 8:28 says, "God works all things to the good for those who love God and are called according to His purposes." How was this true in Naomi's life? In Ruth's? Can you think of other times God took something bad and used it for a good purpose?
8. Why might God have chosen Ruth to be an ancestor of Jesus?

Peter, John, and the Beggar

Acts 3:1-26



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

In the 1st Century A.D., the population of Jerusalem was 100 to 200 thousand people. But Jews from all over the Roman Empire would come to Jerusalem for pilgrimage festivals. At these times Jerusalem's population would **quadruple**. To hold these large crowds, the outer courtyard of the Temple was expanded to 430 x 300 m. There was plenty of room there for thousands of people to gather. Only healthy people were allowed to enter the courtyard. In the times of the apostles and the first believers, the church was still in Jerusalem. They met in the large Temple courts.

Before you read:

1. How are the poor and needy taken care of in your country?
2. Have you ever had something very good and very unexpected come your way?

The Passage

As this story begins, Peter and John were walking together into the Temple area from its main public entrance.² A man who had been born lame was being carried to the temple door. Each day he was placed beside this door, known as the Beautiful Gate. He sat there and begged from the people who were going in.

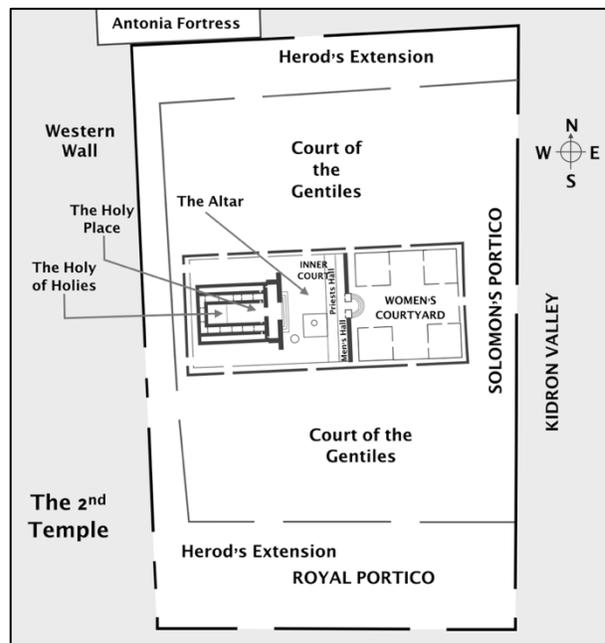
³ The man saw Peter and John entering the temple, and he asked them for money.

⁴ But they looked straight at him and said, "Look up at us!"

⁵ The man stared at them and thought he was going to get something. ⁶ But Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold! But I will give you what I do have. In the name of Jesus Christ from Nazareth, get up and start walking." ⁷ Peter then took him by the right hand and helped him up.

At once the man's feet and ankles became strong,⁸ and he jumped up and started walking. He went with Peter and John into the temple, walking and jumping and praising God.⁹ Everyone saw him walking around and praising God.¹⁰ They knew that he was the beggar who had been lying beside the Beautiful Gate, and they were completely surprised. They could not imagine what had happened to the man...¹² Peter saw that a crowd had gathered, and he said:

Friends, why are you surprised at what has happened? Why are you staring at us? Do you think we have some power of our own? Do you think we were able to make this man walk because we are so religious?¹³ The God that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and our other ancestors worshiped has brought honour to his Servant Jesus. He is the one you betrayed. You turned against him when he was being tried by Pilate, even though Pilate wanted to set him free.



¹⁴ You **rejected** Jesus, who was holy and good. You asked for a murderer to be set free, ¹⁵ and you killed the one who leads people to life. But God raised him from death, and all of us can tell you what he has done. ¹⁶ You see this man, and you know him. He put his faith in the name of Jesus and was made strong. Faith in Jesus made this man completely well while everyone was watching.

¹⁷ My friends, I am sure that you and your leaders didn't know what you were doing. ¹⁸ But God had his prophets tell that his Messiah would suffer, and now he has kept that promise. ¹⁹ So turn to God! Give up your sins, and you will be forgiven. ²⁰ Then that time will come when the Lord will give you fresh strength. He will send you Jesus, his chosen Messiah. ²¹ But Jesus must stay in heaven until God makes all things new, just as his holy prophets promised long ago...

²⁵ You are really the ones God told his prophets to speak to. And you were given the promise that God made to your ancestors. He said to Abraham, "All nations on earth will be blessed because of someone from your family." ²⁶ God sent his chosen Son to you first, because God wanted to bless you and make each one of you turn away from your sins.

The Bible says that, "Many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand (Acts 4:4)."

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescriptures.com

Passage Questions

True or False

1. Peter was a rich man. _____
2. After the beggar was healed, he ran off to tell his friends. _____
3. Peter was able to heal the beggar because he was very religious. _____
4. Peter accused the crowd of betraying Jesus. _____

5. The prophets wrote that the Messiah would suffer. _____
6. God promised Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed by someone from his family. _____
7. Many believed in Jesus because of Peter's message. _____

Match the following words with their meanings. Write the correct letter on the line.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| _____ 1. lame | a. looked long and hard |
| _____ 2. begged | b. increase four times |
| _____ 3. betrayed | c. unable to walk |
| _____ 4. stared | d. asked strangers for money |
| _____ 5. quadruple | e. delivered to an enemy by treachery or disloyalty |
| _____ 6. religious | f. taken to court for judgement |
| _____ 7. rejected | g. carefully following the rules of a religion |
| _____ 8. tried | h. refused someone |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. The population of Jerusalem _____ during a festival.
2. The beggar could not walk. He was _____.
3. The man _____ for money at the gate of the temple.
4. Peter said he could not heal the man because he was _____ .
5. The crowd _____ at the beggar when he was walking and jumping.
6. The people of Jerusalem _____ Jesus as their Messiah.
7. The people _____ Jesus when he was being _____ by Pilate.

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. Why did the beggar sit at the gate of the Temple and not inside the courtyard? What was his life like?

2. Why were the people so surprised to see the beggar in the temple?
3. What did Peter do when he saw the crowds?
4. Did Peter claim to do the healing because he was a religious man?
5. Who did Peter say healed the beggar?
6. What did Peter tell the people:
 - a) about why they had betrayed Jesus?
 - b) about how the beggar was healed?
 - c) about who Jesus was?
 - d) about what they should do?

- *Intermediate*

1. Who are the three main characters of this story?
2. Compare the beggar's life with that of the temple worshippers.
3. What happened to the beggar? Why was this amazing?
4. Did Peter claim to do the healing because he was a religious man? Why was saying this important?
5. Why did Peter accuse the temple worshippers of betraying Jesus?
6. What did Peter tell them about why they had betrayed Jesus? What did he tell them to do? What did he tell them God would do?
7. Why was it important that the people understand what the prophets said about Jesus?
8. What did Peter say was the purpose for God sending Jesus to the people?

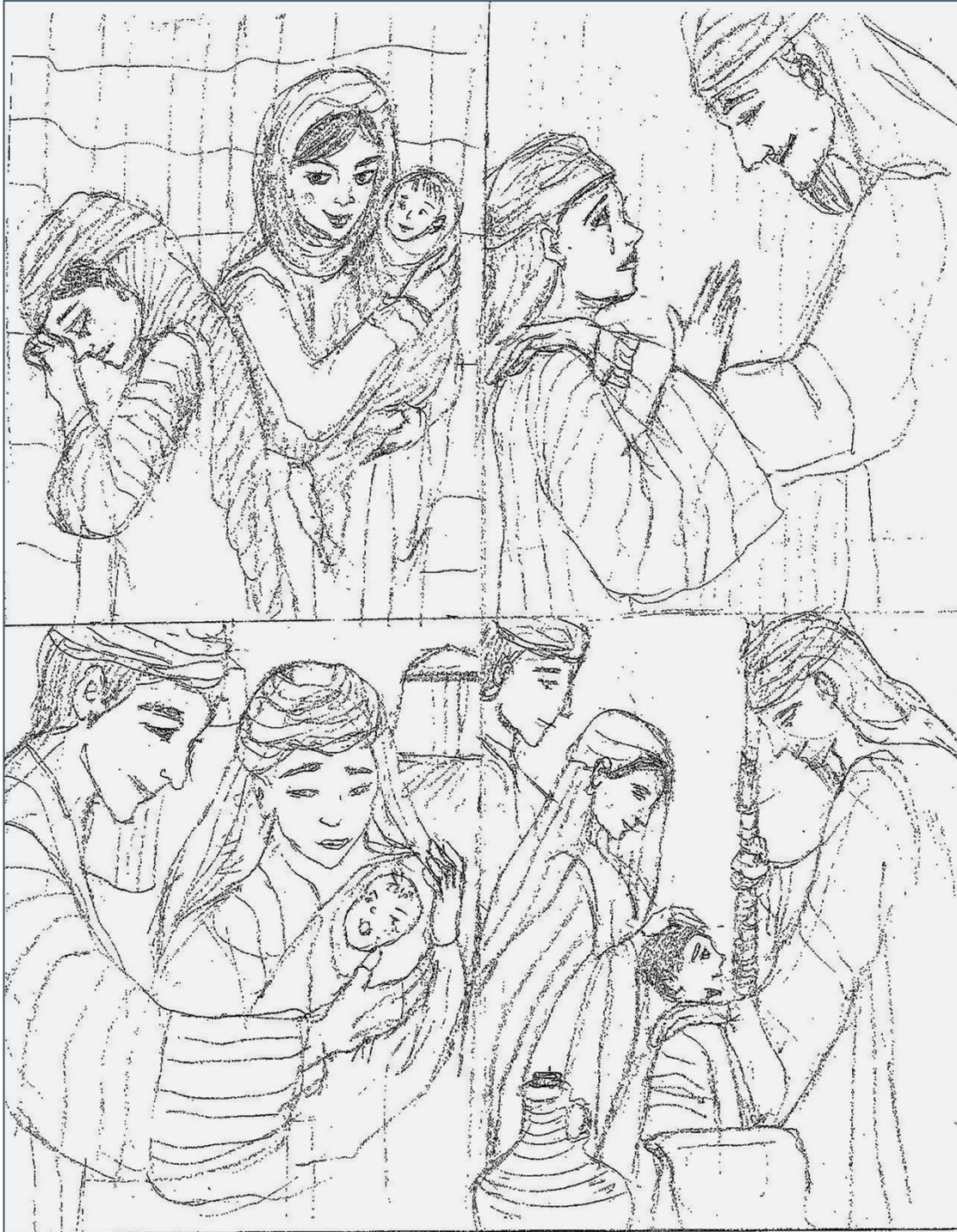
9. Peter spoke of God's promise to Abraham.
 - a. Who is the member of Abraham's family who would bless all families on the earth?
 - b. What does this mean for us?
10. The Bible says that the beggar was placed by the temple gates every day to beg. Since Jesus went in and out of the temple on several occasions, it's possible that he had passed by that beggar. Why do you think Jesus did not heal the beggar before this time?

- *Challenging*

1. Who are the people mentioned in this story?
2. Compare the beggar's life with that of the temple worshippers.
3. What happened that day at the temple?
4. Did Peter claim to do the healing because he was a religious man? Why was saying this important?
5. Why did Peter accuse the Temple worshippers of betraying Jesus?
6. Peter told them that they and their leaders didn't know what they were doing when they betrayed Jesus. Then he told them to turn to God and confess their sins. Then he told them that God would forgive them, refresh them, and send Jesus to them. How do you think this would have affected the people? How had Peter learned to show love to these people?
7. Why was it important that the people understand what the prophets said about Jesus?
8. What did Peter say was the purpose for God sending Jesus to those people? What purpose did God have for those people? For all the 'families of the earth'? Discuss.

Samuel, the Young Boy, Part One

1 Samuel 1



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

This story takes place around 1100 B.C. The Israelite tribes have been settled in Canaan for about 300 years. They had a custom where a person could become a servant of God. Parents could give a child to God, or people could do this themselves. People who did this would not cut their hair.

The village of Shiloh was the home of the Tabernacle - the **tent** where God's presence was. The Israelite families would make a yearly pilgrimage there to offer **sacrifices** and worship. The high priest lived there and **ministered** in the Tabernacle. At the time of this story, Eli was the high priest.

Before you read:

1. How important is it to you to have (or have had) children?
2. Do you keep your promises?

The Passage

1 Samuel 1: ¹Elkanah lived in Ramah, a town in the hill country of Ephraim... ² Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Although Peninnah had children, Hannah did not have any.

³ Once a year Elkanah traveled from his hometown to Shiloh, where he worshiped the LORD All-Powerful and offered sacrifices. Eli was the LORD's priest there...

⁴ Whenever Elkanah offered a sacrifice, he gave some of the meat to Peninnah and some to each of her sons and daughters. ⁵ But he gave Hannah even more, because he loved Hannah very much, even though the LORD had kept her from having children of her own.

⁶ Peninnah liked to make Hannah feel **miserable** about not having any children, ⁷ especially when the family went to the house of the LORD each year. One day, Elkanah was there offering a sacrifice, when Hannah began crying and refused to eat. ⁸ So Elkanah asked, "Hannah, why are



you crying? Why won't you eat? Why do you feel so bad? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

⁹ When the sacrifice had been offered, and they had eaten the meal, Hannah got up and went to pray. Eli was sitting in his chair near the door to the place of worship.

¹⁰ Hannah was **broken-hearted** and was crying as she prayed, ¹¹ "LORD All-Powerful, I am your servant, but I am so miserable! Please let me have a son. I will give him to you for as long as he lives, and his hair will never be cut."

¹²⁻¹³ Hannah prayed silently to the LORD for a long time. But her lips were moving, and Eli thought she was **drunk**. ¹⁴ "How long are you going to stay drunk?" he asked. "**Sober up!**"

¹⁵⁻¹⁶ "Sir, please don't think I'm no good!" Hannah answered. "I'm not drunk, and I haven't been drinking. But I do feel miserable and terribly upset. I've been praying all this time, telling the LORD about my problems."

¹⁷ Eli replied, "You may go home now and stop worrying. I'm sure the God of Israel will answer your prayer."

¹⁸ "Sir, thank you for being so kind to me," Hannah said. Then she left, and after eating something, she felt much better.

⁹ Elkanah and his family got up early the next morning and worshiped the LORD. Then they went back home to Ramah. Later the LORD blessed Elkanah and Hannah ²⁰ with a son. She named him Samuel because she had asked the LORD for him.

²¹ The next time Elkanah and his family went to offer their yearly sacrifice, ²² ... Hannah stayed home, because she had told Elkanah, "Samuel and I won't go until he's old enough for me to stop **nursing** him. Then I'll give him to the LORD, and he can stay there at Shiloh for the rest of his life."

²³ "You know what's best," Elkanah said. ... Hannah did not go to Shiloh until she stopped nursing Samuel.

²⁴⁻²⁵ When it was the time of year to go to Shiloh again, Hannah and Elkanah took Samuel to the LORD's house. They brought along a three-year-old bull, ...offered the bull as a sacrifice, then brought the little boy to Eli.

²⁶ "Sir," Hannah said, "a few years ago I stood here beside you and asked the LORD ²⁷ to give me a child. Here he is! The LORD gave me just what I asked for. ²⁸ Now I am giving him to the LORD, and he will be the LORD's servant for as long as he lives."

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescritures.com

Passage Questions

Put the story in the right order. The first one is done for you.

- a) Hannah went to pray to the LORD All Powerful for a son. _____
- b) Elkanah took Hannah, Penninah and her children to Shiloh. _____
- c) Eli the priest thought Hannah was drunk. _____
- d) Elkanah had two wives, but only one had children ____1__
- e) Samuel's parents gave him to God at Shiloh when he finished nursing. _____
- f) In Shiloh, Penninah made Hannah feel miserable for not having children.

- g) Hannah was so upset that she cried and could not eat. _____
- h) God answered Hannah by giving her and Elkanah a son, called Samuel. _____

Match the following words with their meanings. Write the correct letter on the line.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. _____ tent | a. to stop drinking alcohol |
| 2. _____ sacrifices | b. feeding a baby by his mother's milk |
| 3. _____ sober up | c. a moveable house made of cloth and poles |
| 4. _____ broken-hearted | d. extremely sad; very, very unhappy |
| 5. _____ nursing | e. animals killed for religious reasons |
| 6. _____ miserable | f. drinking too much alcohol |
| 7. _____ ministered | g. served |
| 8. _____ drunk | h. unhappy |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. Elkanah offered _____ in Shiloh.
2. Eli _____ in the Tabernacle, which was a _____ where God was present.
3. Hannah was _____ because she was childless, and Penninah made her feel even more _____.
4. Eli told Hannah to _____ because he thought she was _____.
5. Hannah did not go to Shiloh until she had finished _____ Samuel.

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. Who was Hannah? Why was she unhappy?
2. Why did the family go to Shiloh?
3. What did Hannah ask God for? Why was she so upset when she prayed?
4. Why did Eli think Hannah was drunk? What was Hannah doing instead of drinking?
5. What caused Hannah to feel better after talking to Eli?
6. The name Samuel means, "the name of God." Why did Hannah name her son this?
7. Did Hannah keep her promise to God? How?
8. Has God ever answered your prayer?

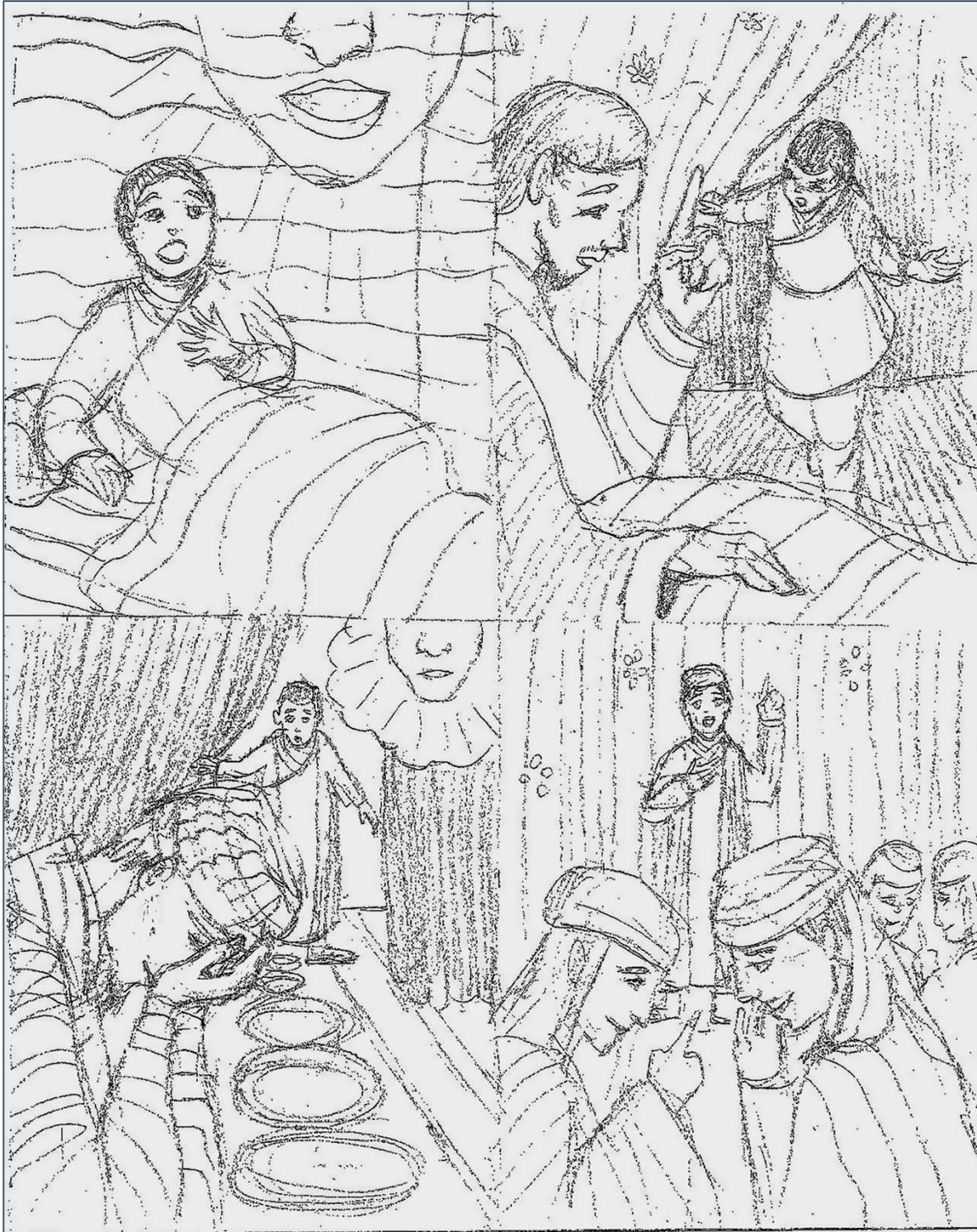
- *Intermediate*

1. Who was Hannah? What were some problems Hannah had?

2. Why do you think Hannah was so unhappy about being childless? (Her husband loved her and treated her well.)
 3. Why did Eli think Hannah was drunk? What was Hannah actually doing?
 4. What caused Hannah to feel better after talking to Eli? Why?
 5. The name Samuel means, "the name of God." Why did Hannah name her son this?
 6. How did Hannah keep her promise to God? What did she do?
 7. How important is prayer to this story? Has God ever answered your prayer?
- *Challenging*
1. Who was Hannah? What were some problems Hannah had?
 2. How did Elkanah treat Hannah? How might this have contributed to the family conflict?
 3. What was significant about Hannah's prayer to God?
 4. Would you be able to pray this kind of prayer and make this kind of promise to God?
 5. What does Eli's comment "How long are you going to stay drunk?" reveal about himself and his interactions with others?
 6. The name Samuel means, "The name of God." Why did Hannah name her son Samuel? What is important about that?
 7. How does Hannah keep her promise? What strength of character does this show?
 8. How important is prayer to this story? Did you learn anything about the character of God?

Samuel the young boy, part two

1 Samuel 3:1-21



Illustrations by Annie Yang

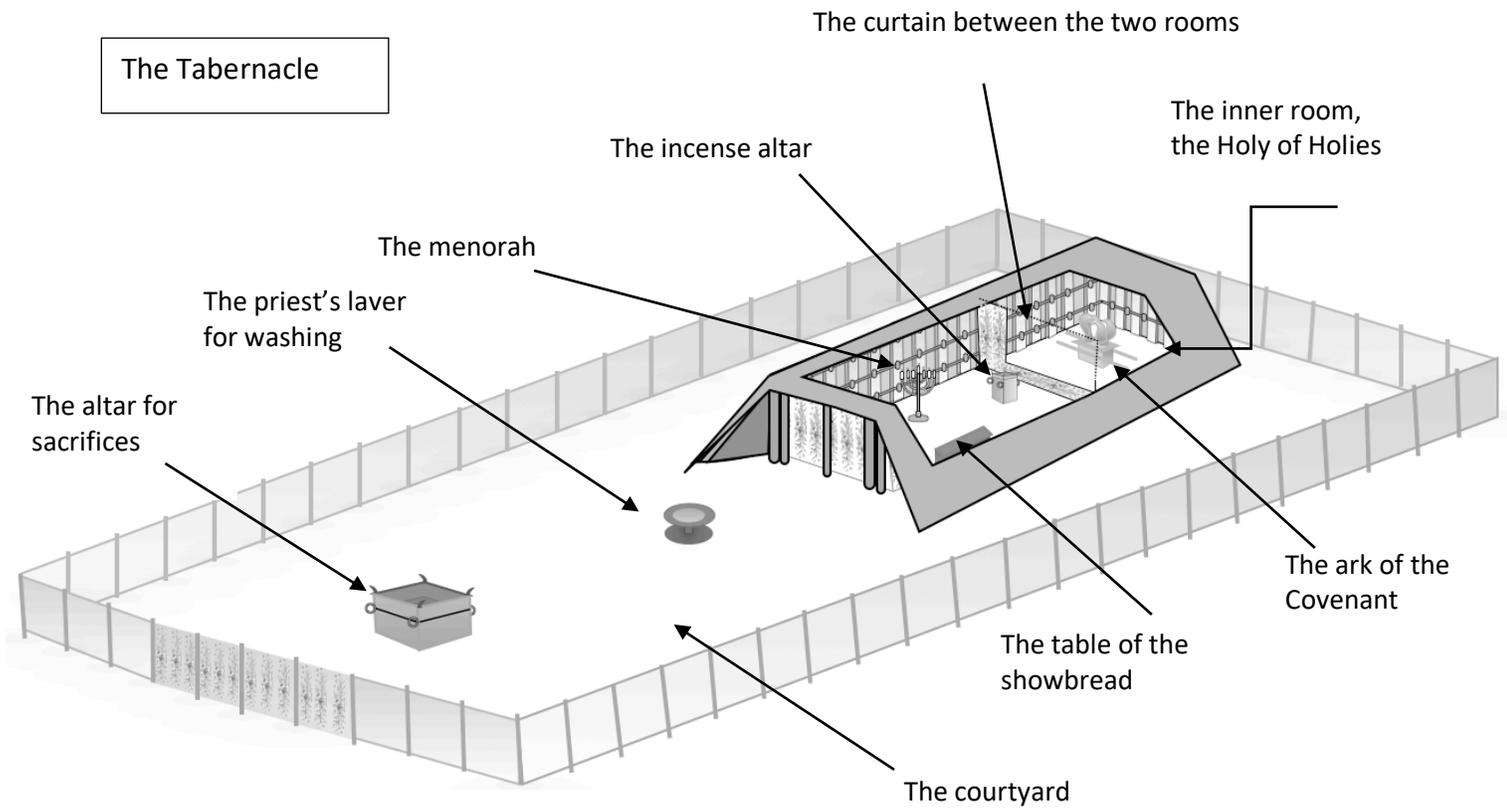
Background:

In the last lesson, we read about how God answered the prayer of a woman by giving her a son, called Samuel. When Samuel was still a young boy his parents gave him to Eli, the high priest, to serve God in the Tabernacle. The word *tabernacle* means "dwelling place." It was a tent with two rooms, built as a place of worship. The first room had an olive-oil lamp that would burn all night. In the second room was the Ark of the Covenant, the sacred chest where God's presence dwelt.

There was an altar in front of this tent. The priest would burn sacrifices on it every morning and evening for the sins of himself and his family, and for all the Israelites. At the time of this story, the Tabernacle was in Shiloh.

Before you read:

1. How do you think God communicates with people?
2. Has anyone ever called you to wake up when you were sleeping?



"Here I am!" Samuel answered. ⁵ Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am. What do you want?"

"I didn't call you," Eli answered. "Go back to bed."

Samuel went back. ⁶ Again the LORD called out Samuel's name. Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am," he said. "What do you want?"

Eli told him, "Son, I didn't call you. Go back to sleep."

⁷ The LORD had not spoken to Samuel before, and Samuel did not recognize the voice. ⁸ When the LORD called out his name for the third time, Samuel went to Eli again and said, "Here I am. What do you want?"

Eli finally realized that it was the LORD who was speaking to Samuel. ⁹ So he said, "Go back and lie down! If someone speaks to you again, answer, 'I'm listening, LORD. What do you want me to do?'"

Once again Samuel went back and lay down.

¹⁰ The LORD then stood beside Samuel and called out as he had done before, "Samuel! Samuel!"

"I'm listening," Samuel answered. "What do you want me to do?"

¹¹ The LORD said, "Samuel, I am going to do something in Israel that will **shock** everyone who hears about it! ¹² I will **punish** Eli and his family, just as I promised.

¹³ He knew that his sons refused to respect me and he let them **get away with** it, even though I said I would punish his family forever. ¹⁴ I warned Eli that sacrifices or offerings could never make things right! His family has done too many **disgusting** things.

¹⁵ The next morning, Samuel got up and opened the doors to the LORD's house. He was afraid to tell Eli what the LORD had said. ¹⁶ But Eli told him, "Samuel, my boy, come here! ... ¹⁷ Tell me everything. I pray that God will punish you terribly if you don't tell me every word he said!"

¹⁸ Samuel told Eli everything. Then Eli said, "He is the LORD, and he will do what's right."

¹⁹ As Samuel grew up, the LORD helped him and made everything Samuel said come true. ²⁰ From the town of Dan in the north to the town of Beersheba in the south, everyone in the country knew that Samuel was truly the LORD's prophet. ²¹ The LORD often appeared to Samuel at Shiloh and told him what to say.

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescriptures.com

Passage Questions

Change these False sentences to True:

1. Eli was a priest who had no children. _____
2. Eli called out Samuel's name. _____
3. The Lord called Samuel two times. _____
4. The Lord told Samuel He was happy with Eli's family.

5. Samuel was happy to tell Eli what God had said.

6. No one thought Samuel was a prophet of God. _____

Match the following words with their meanings. Write the correct letter on the line.

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. _____ blind | a. do something bad to someone who has done bad things |
| 2. _____ dwelling | b. floor covering |
| 3. _____ mat | c. surprise |
| 4. _____ punish | d. a person who can't see |
| 5. _____ chest | e. living |
| 6. _____ get away with | f. a large box for storing things |
| 7. _____ disgusting | g. experience bad results |

8. _____ shock

h. very nasty or evil behaviour

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. Eli the priest was almost _____.
2. Eli said God would _____ Samuel terribly if he didn't tell him.
3. Samuel slept on a _____ close to the sacred _____.
4. Eli's sons had done _____ things, and Eli let them _____ it.
5. The Tabernacle was God's _____ place where He came to meet with the people.
6. God was going to _____ everyone in Israel.

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. Who was Eli?
2. Where did Samuel sleep?
3. Who did Samuel think was calling him?
4. What do you think would make God angry? Why was God angry with Eli's family?
5. Why was Samuel afraid to tell Eli?
6. What did Eli say to this news?
7. Are you surprised Eli said this? Why or why not?
8. How did the people of Israel know that Samuel was God's prophet?

- *Intermediate*

1. Who was Eli? What kind of problem did Eli have?

2. Why do you think Samuel slept in the room near the sacred chest (the Ark of the Covenant)?
3. What did Samuel hear in the night?
4. What were some of the reasons why God was angry with Eli's family?
5. How does Eli treat Samuel who is clearly afraid to tell him what God said?
6. Is Eli's response a little surprising? Why or why not?
7. How did the people of Israel know that Samuel was God's prophet?

- *Challenging*

1. Who was Eli and what was his family like?
2. Why would God call Samuel three times?
3. What were some of the reasons why God was angry with Eli's family?
4. How does Eli treat Samuel, who is clearly afraid to tell him what God said?
5. How does Eli's threat to Samuel reveal his character?
6. Is Eli's response a little surprising? Why or why not?
7. How did the people of Israel know that Samuel was God's prophet?

Simeon and Anna, the Elderly Prophets

Luke 2:22-38



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

The first emperor, Caesar Augustus, brought Roman peace to the **entire** Mediterranean area. But Roman peace came with Roman **absolute** control. Before Rome, Judah had been a large, **independent** nation. But Rome divided Judah and the surrounding region into small Roman provinces. This prompted the Jews to look for their Messiah. He was the one prophets had said would **restore** their nation (Isaiah 61:1-4), be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), of King David's family (2 Samuel 7: 12-13), at about that time (Daniel 9:24). They hoped he would save them from Rome. Jesus' birth fit all the prophecies.

This story begins when Jesus' parents, Joseph and Mary, went into Jerusalem to the temple to offer sacrifice for their first-born son.

Before you read:

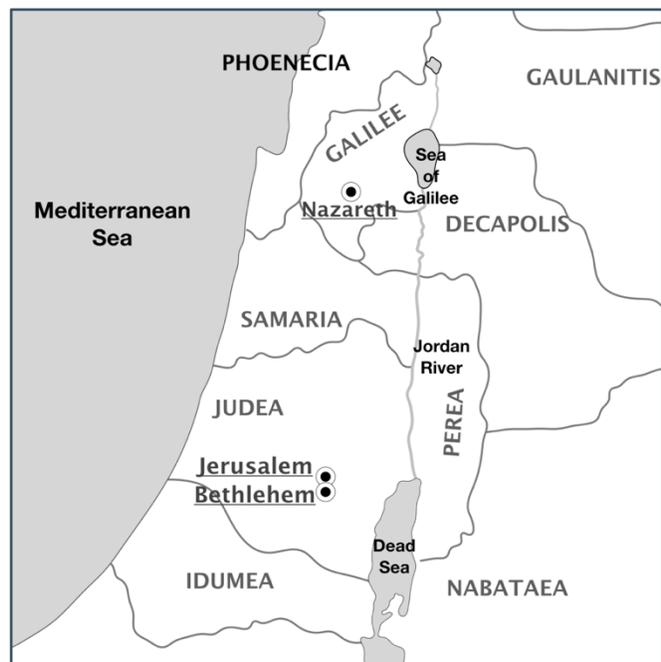
1. What are the advantages of being old?

The Passage

Luke 2: ²² The time came for Mary and Joseph to do what the Law of Moses says a mother is supposed to do after her baby is born.

They took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem and presented him to the Lord, ²³ just as the Law of the Lord says, "Each first-born baby boy belongs to the Lord." ²⁴ The Law of the Lord also says that parents have to offer a sacrifice, giving **at least** a pair of doves or two young **pigeons**. So that is what Mary and Joseph did.

²⁵ At this time a man named Simeon was living in Jerusalem. Simeon was a good man. He loved God and was waiting for God to save the people of Israel. God's Spirit came to him ²⁶ and told him that he would not die until he had seen **Christ** the Lord.



²⁷ When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to do what the Law of Moses says should be done for a new baby, the Spirit told Simeon to go into the temple.

²⁸ Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and praised God,

²⁹ "Lord, I am your servant, and now I can die in peace, because you have kept your promise to me. ³⁰ With my own eyes I have seen what you have done to save your people, ³¹ and foreign nations will also see this. ³² Your mighty power is a light for all nations, and it will bring honour to your people Israel."

³³ Jesus' parents were surprised at what Simeon had said. ³⁴ Then he blessed them and told Mary, "This child of yours will cause many people in Israel to fall and others to stand. The child will be like a warning sign. Many people will reject him, ³⁵ and you, Mary, will suffer as though you had been stabbed by a dagger. But all this will show what people are really thinking."

³⁶ The prophet Anna was also there in the temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. In her youth she had been married for seven years, but her husband died. ³⁷ And now she was eighty-four years old. Night and day she served God in the temple by praying and often going without eating.

³⁸ At that time Anna came in and praised God. She spoke about the child Jesus to everyone who hoped for Jerusalem to be set free.

A new era had come to Israel, and to the world. Deuteronomy 19:15 says that there must be two witnesses to validate any event. God chose Simeon and Anna for these two witnesses.

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescriptures.com

Passage Questions

Match the beginning with the correct ending. The first is done for you.

- _c_1. Prophets said the Messiah a. because God's Spirit told him to go.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ___2. Jesus' parents went to the Temple | b. that he would live to see the Messiah. |
| ___3. Simeon went to the Temple | c. would come from King David's family. |
| ___4. The prophet Anna lived at the | d. Jesus would save and free his people. |
| ___5. God promised Simeon | e. Temple where she prayed to God. |
| ___6. Joseph and Mary felt | f. to sacrifice for their newborn son. |
| ___7. Anna and Simeon prophesied that | g. surprised by Simeon's words. |

Circle the letter for the word or phrase that best defines the underlined word in the sentence.

1. He brought Roman peace to the entire Mediterranean area
 - a. all the area
 - b. most of the area
 - c. a small part of the area
2. Judah had been a large independent nation
 - a. under the control of another country
 - b. poor
 - c. not controlled or ruled by another country
3. Rome had absolute control
 - a. complete and total
 - b. some, partial
 - c. not any
4. Restore what had once been their nation
 - a. destroy
 - b. to give back something that was lost or taken
 - c. to provide a new supply of something
5. Suffer as though you had been stabbed by a dagger
 - a. a box
 - b. a small pin
 - c. a large knife
6. There must be two witnesses
 - a. people who work on something
 - b. people who see something
 - c. people who own something

7. To validate any event
 - a. show something is true
 - b. make
 - c. pay for
8. The Holy Spirit told Simeon he would see Christ the Lord
 - a. an angel
 - b. the Messiah
 - c. a prophet

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. What did Rome bring to the region?
2. What are the names of two of the Roman provinces in the region?
3. Why were the Jews looking for their Messiah?
4. What promise did God make to Simeon?
5. What did Simeon tell Mary?
6. What made Anna an unusual woman?
7. What did Anna tell the people?
8. How do you think Mary and Joseph felt after hearing these prophecies?

- *Intermediate*

1. Who was Caesar Augustus?
2. Why do you think Rome wanted to divide Judah up into provinces?
3. Why did the Jews not like Roman peace?
4. What did the Jews expect their Messiah to be like?

5. What did prophecy (Isaiah 61:1-4, 2Samuel 7: 12-13, Micah 5:2, and Daniel 9:24) say about the Messiah?
6. Why do you think God used Simeon and Anna as his two witnesses?
7. Why was this a new era for Israel?

- *Challenging*

1. Who was Augustus Caesar and what did he accomplish?
2. Why were the Jews looking for their Messiah?
3. Compare Simeon and Anna. Are they both prophets? Why or why not?
4. Was it good that Simeon told Mary that her heart would be broken? Why or why not?
5. What did prophecy (Isaiah 61:1-4, 2Samuel 7: 12-13, Micah 5:2, and Daniel 9:24) say about the Messiah?
6. Why might God have chosen Simeon and Anna for the two witnesses?
7. Why is this a new era for Israel?

Samson, the Wilful, Part One Judges 13:1-5; Judges 14:1-20



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

This story takes place sometime between 1154 and 1124 B.C. after the Israelites were settled in Canaan. God protected the people when they served and obeyed Him. Whenever they disobeyed, God would let their enemies win over them. But when the Israelites cried out to Him, He would provide a leader, called a judge, to deliver them. In this story, the Israelites were disobeying God, so God had allowed the Philistines to take control of Israel for forty years.

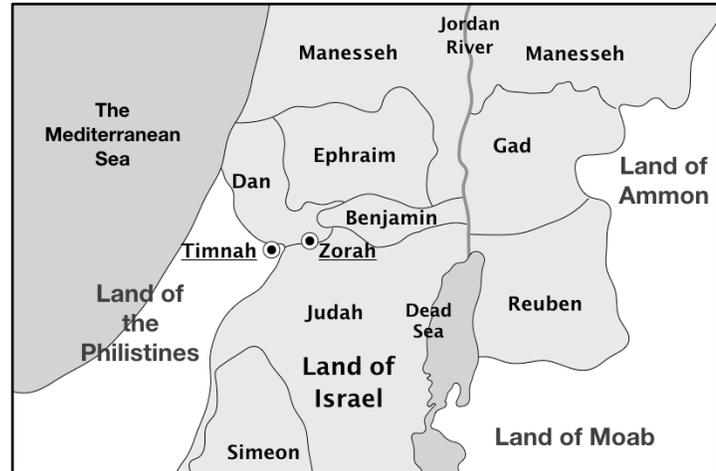
Israelites had a custom where a person could become a special servant of God. These people were called Nazirites, and they were not allowed to drink alcohol, eat 'unclean' foods, or to cut their hair.

Before you read:

1. In North America we have superheroes such as Superman, Batman, and Spider-Man. When you were a child, did you have a favorite superhero?
2. What would happen if a superhero did not care about what was right?

The Passage

Judges 13: ² Manoah from the tribe of Dan lived in the town of Zorah. His wife was not able to have children, ³⁻⁵ but one day an angel from the LORD appeared to her and said, "...Soon you will be pregnant and have a son. He will belong to God from the day he is born, so his hair must never be cut. ... Your son will begin to set Israel free from the Philistines"...



When her son was born, she named him Samson. The Lord blessed Samson, and God's Spirit was in him as a young man.

Judges 14: ¹One day, Samson went to Timnah, where he saw a Philistine woman.

² When he got back home, he told his parents, "I saw a Philistine woman in Timnah, and I want to marry her. Get her for me!"...

*Even though his parents didn't want Samson to marry a **pagan** Philistine, they finally agreed to go and arrange the marriage.* ⁴ At that time, the Philistines were in control of Israel, and the LORD wanted to **stir up** trouble for them. That's why he made Samson desire that woman.

⁵ As Samson and his parents reached the vineyards near Timnah, a fierce young lion suddenly roared and attacked Samson. ⁶ But the LORD's Spirit took control of Samson, and with his bare hands he tore the lion apart, as though it had been a young goat...

⁷ When they got to Timnah, Samson talked to the woman, and he was sure that she was **the one for him**.

⁸ Later, Samson returned to Timnah for the wedding. And when he came near the place where the lion had attacked, he left the road to see what was left of the lion.

He was surprised to see that bees were living in the lion's **skeleton**, and that they had made some honey...

¹⁰ While Samson's father went to make the final arrangements with the bride and her family, Samson threw a big party, as **grooms** usually did. ¹¹ When the Philistines saw what Samson was like, they told thirty of their young men to stay with him at the party.

¹² Samson told the thirty young men, "This party will last for seven days. Let's make a bet: I'll tell you a **riddle**, and if you can tell me the right answer before the party is over, I'll give each one of you a shirt and a full change of clothing. ¹³ But if you can't tell me the answer, then each of you will have to give me a shirt and a full change of clothing."

"It's a bet!" the Philistines said. "Tell us the riddle."

¹⁴ Samson said: "Once so strong and mighty — now so sweet and tasty!"

Three days went by, and the Philistine young men had not come up with the right answer. ¹⁵ Finally, on the seventh day of the party they went to Samson's bride and said, "You had better trick your husband into telling you the answer to his riddle. Have you invited us here just to rob us? If you don't find out the answer, we will burn you and your family to death."

¹⁶ Samson's bride went to him and started crying in his arms. "You must really hate me," she sobbed. "If you loved me at all, you would have told me the answer to your riddle."...

¹⁷ For the entire seven days of the party, she had been **whining** and trying to get the answer from him. But that seventh day she put so much pressure on Samson that he finally gave in and told her the answer. She went straight to the young men and told them. ¹⁸ Before sunset that day, the men of the town went to Samson with this answer: "A lion is the strongest—honey is the sweetest!"

Samson replied, "This answer you have given me, doubtless came from my bride-to-be."

¹⁹ Then the LORD's Spirit took control of Samson. He went to Ashkelon, where he killed thirty men and took their clothing. Samson then gave it to the thirty young men at Timnah...*Samson called off the wedding, and stormed home.*

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?

Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour
4.1 Samson, the Wilful, Part One

2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescriptures.com

Passage Questions

True or False

1. Israel was obedient to God. _____
2. Their son, Samson, was not allowed to drink beer. _____
3. The Philistines didn't believe in the power of Israel's God. _____
4. Some bees lived in the skeleton of the lion the Philistines killed. _____
5. Samson's riddle was too easy. _____
6. Samson's bride was afraid of the 30 Philistine men. _____
7. The Philistines cheated to get the answer. _____

Match the following words with their meanings. Write the correct letter on the line.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. _____ stir up | a. the man the bride marries |
| 2. _____ riddle | b. people who don't believe in God's power |
| 3. _____ skeleton | c. the special person you want to marry |
| 4. _____ pagans | d. the complete set of bones of a body |
| 5. _____ "the one for him" | e. make something bad happen |
| 6. _____ called off | f. stopped something before it happened |
| 7. _____ groom | g. a joke that is a question you try to guess |
| 8. _____ whining | h. complaining |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. Samson liked to tease people with a _____.
2. Samson was sure this woman was _____.

Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

4.1 Samson, the Wilful, Part One

3. Israelites considered the Philistines to be _____.
4. Samson's bride was sobbing and _____ for Samson to tell her the riddle's answer.
5. The _____ traditionally throws a big party at a wedding.
6. Samson wanted to _____ trouble for the Philistines in Ashkelon.
7. Samson didn't trust the bride, so he _____ the wedding.
8. After the lion died all that was left was a _____.

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. What were some things God told Nazirites not to do?
2. What did the angel say about how God would use Samson?
3. What happened on the way to Timnah? What does that show about Samson's strength?
4. What did Samson find in the skeleton of the lion?
5. Why do you think the Philistines told 30 young men to stay with Samson after they saw what Samson was like?
6. Do you think the bet Samson made with the young men was a fair one?
7. What did the young men threaten to do if the bride didn't get the answer from Samson?
8. Did Samson live happily ever after with his bride? Why or why not?
9. How did God use Samson for His purpose in this story?

- *Intermediate*

1. Who was disobeying God again? Why do you think they kept doing that?

Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

4.1 Samson, the Wilful, Part One

2. What were some things God told Nazirites not to do?
3. What happened on the way to Timnah?
4. Judges 14:9 says that Samson scooped and ate some of the honey in the skeleton of the lion. What does his behaviour show about his character?
5. Did the Philistines trust Samson? How do you know this?
6. Was the bet Samson made with the young men fair?
7. What did the young men threaten to do if the bride didn't get the answer from Samson?
8. Did Samson live happily ever after with his bride?
9. How did God use Samson for His purposes in this story?

- *Challenging*

1. Who was disobeying God again? Why do you think they kept doing that?
2. What were some things God told Samson's parents not to do? Why do you think these rules are important?
3. What happened on the way to Timnah?
4. Judges 14:9 says that Samson scooped and ate some of the honey in the skeleton of the lion. What does his behavior show about his character?
5. Did the Philistines trust Samson? How do you know this?
6. Why was the bet Samson made with the young men risky?
7. What did the young men threaten to do if the bride didn't get the answer from Samson? What does this show about the character of the Philistines?

Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

4.1 Samson, the Wilful, Part One

8. What happened after they gave Samson the right answer? Why would the Holy Spirit fill Samson and cause him to kill 30 men for their clothing?
9. Did Samson live happily ever after with his bride?
10. What do you think is God's purpose in this story?

Samson, the Wilful, Part Two

Judges 16:4-31



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

At the time of this story, the Philistines had controlled the Israelites for forty years. Samson was the 15th judge (leader) of Israel. He was called by God to deliver the Israelites from the Philistines. God had given him amazing strength, and he had killed 1000 Philistines and destroyed their farms. But Samson's interest was Philistine women, even though God's law said to stay away from anyone who worshiped other gods.

Before you read:

1. "Femme fatale" is a French phrase that means 'deadly woman'. Can you think of a woman who used her beauty to get what she wanted?
2. What happened to the men who loved that 'femme fatale'?

The Passage

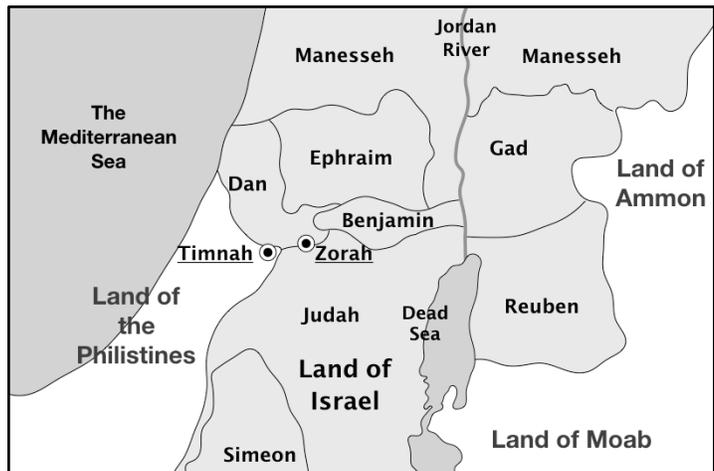
Judges 16: ⁴ Some time later, Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah...

⁵ The Philistine rulers went to Delilah and said, "Trick Samson into telling you what makes him so strong and what can make him weak. Then we can tie him up so he can't get away. If you find out his secret, we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver."

⁶ The next time Samson was at Delilah's house, she asked, "Samson, what makes you so strong? How can I tie you up so you can't get away? Come on, you can tell me."

⁷ Samson answered, "If someone ties me up with seven new **bowstrings** that have never been dried, it will make me just as weak as anyone else."

⁸⁻⁹ The Philistine rulers gave seven new bowstrings to Delilah. They also told some of their soldiers to go to Delilah's house and hide in the room where Samson and Delilah were. If the bowstrings made Samson weak, they would be able to capture him. Delilah tied up Samson with the bowstrings and shouted, "Samson, the Philistines are attacking!"



Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour
4.2 Samson, the Wilful, Part Two

Samson snapped the bowstrings, as though they were pieces of scorched string. The Philistines had not found out why Samson was so strong.

¹⁰ "You lied and made me look like a fool," Delilah said. "Now tell me. How can I really tie you up?" ...

Samson still didn't trust Delilah, and he lied to her two more times about the secret of his strength. ¹⁵ "Samson," Delilah said, "you claim to love me, but you don't mean it! You've made me look like a fool three times now, and you still haven't told me why you are so strong." ¹⁶ Delilah started **nagging** and **pestering** him day after day, until he couldn't stand it any longer.

¹⁷ Finally, Samson told her the truth. "I have belonged to God ever since I was born, so my hair has never been cut. If it were ever cut off, my strength would leave me, and I would be as weak as anyone else."

¹⁸ Delilah realized that he was telling the truth. So she sent someone to tell the Philistine rulers, "Come to my house one more time. Samson has finally told me the truth."

The Philistine rulers went to Delilah's house, and they brought along the silver they had promised her. ¹⁹ Delilah had **lulled** Samson to sleep with his head resting in her lap. She signalled to one of the Philistine men as she began cutting off Samson's seven braids. And by the time she was finished, Samson's strength was gone. Delilah tied him up ²⁰ and shouted, "Samson, the Philistines are attacking!"

Samson woke up and thought, "I'll break loose and escape, just as I always do." He did not realize that the LORD had stopped helping him.

²¹ The Philistines grabbed Samson and poked out his eyes... Then they put him to work, turning a **millstone** to grind grain. ²² But they didn't cut his hair any more, so it started growing back.

²³ The Philistine rulers threw a big party and sacrificed a lot of animals to their god Dagon. The rulers said: "Samson was our enemy, but our god Dagon helped us capture him!" ²⁴⁻²⁵ Everyone there was having a good time, and they shouted, "Bring out Samson—he's still good for a few more laughs!"... *A young man led Samson to the party.*

²⁷ The Philistine rulers were celebrating in a temple packed with people and with three thousand more on the flat roof. They had all been watching Samson and **making fun of him**. ²⁸ Samson prayed, "Please remember me, LORD God... Make me strong one last time, so I can take **revenge** for at least one of my eyes!"

²⁹ Samson was standing between the two middle columns that held up the roof. He felt around and found one column with his right hand, and the other with his left hand. ³⁰ Then he shouted, "Let me die with the Philistines!" He pushed against the columns as hard as he could, and the temple **collapsed** with the Philistine rulers and everyone else still inside. Samson killed more Philistines when he died than he had killed during his entire life.

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescriptures.com

Passage Questions

Put the story in the right order. The first one is done for you.

- i) Delilah nagged and pestered Samson until he finally told her the truth. _____
- j) Samson liked Delilah, so the Philistines hired her to find the secret of his strength. _____
- k) Delilah cut Samson's hair, so he lost his strength, and the Philistines blinded him. _____
- l) Samson killed many Philistines, so they wanted revenge. 1
- m) The Philistines had a big party in Dagon's temple to celebrate Samson's capture. _____
- n) Delilah asked Samson, "How can I tie you up so you can't get away?" _____
- o) Samson prayed to God, then he pulled the temple down, killing all the Philistines. _____
- p) Samson lied to Delilah three times about how to make him weak. _____

Match the following words with their meanings. Write the correct letter on the line.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. _____ trick | a. make someone pay for evil action |
| 2. _____ making fun of | b. a large stone used to grind grain |
| 3. _____ collapsed | c. to annoy by asking over and over |
| 4. _____ bowstring | d. humiliate |
| 5. _____ nagging and pestering | e. a way of cheating |
| 6. _____ millstone | f. to fall down on the ground |
| 7. _____ lull | g. to make someone feel very calm and safe |
| 8. _____ revenge | h. string used to shoot an arrow |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. Delilah kept _____ Samson to learn his secret.
2. They put Samson to work by pushing a heavy _____.
3. The Philistines wanted Delilah to _____ Samson.
4. Delilah _____ Samson to sleep, so she could cut his hair.
5. Samson had _____ on the Philistines when the whole building _____, killing them all.
6. Delilah tied Samson with seven _____, but he broke them.
7. The Philistines brought Samson to the party so they could _____ him.

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. What did the Philistine leaders want to know?
2. Why did Delilah do as they asked?
3. Why did Samson tell Delilah the truth?
4. What happened to Samson after Delilah cut his hair?

Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour
4.2 Samson, the Wilful, Part Two

5. What was Samson's final wish?
 6. What did Samson do that showed he didn't care about God's law?
 7. What did Samson do that showed he still cared about God?
 8. What lesson did Samson learn about God?
- *Intermediate*
 1. Who did Samson fall in love with? Was this person a good choice? Why or why not?
 2. What did the Philistine leaders want to know?
 3. What was Delilah's reason for obeying them?
 4. What were the Philistines hoping to do?
 5. Why did Samson continually trick Delilah?
 6. Why did Samson finally tell her the truth? Do you think he really believed he would lose his strength?
 7. How was Samson treated by the Philistines? What is the reason for their behavior?
 8. What lesson did Samson learn about God?
 9. What final wish did God grant Samson?
 - *Challenging*
 1. Who did Samson 'fall in love' with? Was this person a good choice? Why or why not?

Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

4.2 Samson, the Wilful, Part Two

2. What is the difference between love and **infatuation** (temporary passion)? Does a relationship need more than love?
3. What did the Philistine leaders want to know? Do you think Delilah had a choice? Why or why not?
4. What motivated Delilah to obey them? What ruin did she bring in her choice?
5. What were the Philistines hoping to do?
6. Why did Samson continually trick Delilah?
7. Why did Samson finally tell her the truth? Do you think he really believed he would lose his strength? Explain your answer.
8. How was Samson treated by the Philistines? What is the reason for their behavior?
9. What lesson did Samson learn about God? Why do you suppose it took him so long to learn this lesson?
10. What final wish did God grant Samson? What motivated Samson to ask for this?

Saul, the Persecutor

Acts: 6-10



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

Saul was a highly educated man who had studied Jewish scripture and history. He was also a Pharisee, someone who was a Law **expert**. The Pharisees were part of the Jewish High Court, called the Sanhedrin. They were very **strict** about keeping their traditions. They made many new laws, but they did not understand God's loving reasons for His laws. That is why Jesus had opposed their **authority**.

At the time of this story, thousands of Jews were turning from religious traditions to follow the way of Jesus Christ. The Sanhedrin turned against those Christ followers. They even **stoned** a leader called Stephen to death with Saul's help.

Before you read:

1. A turning point is a time when something changes direction. What has been a turning point - in your life, or in a world event- that you have experienced?

The Passage

Acts 8 ¹⁻² ... Some faithful followers of the Lord buried Stephen and mourned very much for him. At that time the church in Jerusalem suffered terribly. All of the Lord's followers, except the apostles, were **scattered** everywhere in Judea and Samaria. ³ Saul started making a lot of trouble for the church. He went from house to house, arresting men and women and putting them in jail. ⁴ The Lord's followers who had been scattered went from place to place, telling the good news.

Acts 9: Saul kept on threatening to kill the Lord's followers. He even went to the high priest ² and asked



for letters to the Jewish leaders in Damascus. He did this because he wanted to arrest and take to Jerusalem any man or woman who had accepted the Lord's Way.

³ When Saul had almost reached Damascus, a bright light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice that said, "Saul! Saul! Why are you so **cruel** to me?"

⁵ "Who are you?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus," the Lord answered. "I am the one you are so cruel to. ⁶ Now get up and go into the city, where you will be told what to do."

⁷ The men with Saul stood there speechless. They had heard the voice, but they had not seen anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, and when he opened his eyes, he could not see a thing. Someone then led him by the hand to Damascus, ⁹ and for three days he was blind and did not eat or drink.

¹⁰ A follower named Ananias lived in Damascus, and the Lord spoke to him in a **vision**... *God told Ananias to go where Saul was staying and heal his eyes. But Ananias didn't want to go because he was very afraid of Saul.*

¹⁵ The Lord said to Ananias, "Go! I have chosen him to tell foreigners, kings, and the people of Israel about me. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for worshipping in my name."

¹⁷ Ananias left and went into the house where Saul was staying. Ananias placed his hands on him and said, "Saul, the Lord Jesus has sent me. He is the same one who appeared to you along the road. He wants you to be able to see and to be filled with the Holy Spirit."

¹⁸ Suddenly something like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see. He got up and was **baptized**. ¹⁹ Then he ate and felt much better. For several days Saul stayed with the Lord's followers in Damascus. ²⁰ Soon he went to the Jewish meeting places and started telling people that Jesus is the Son of God.

*Saul became the **inspired** author of 13 books of the New Testament. We know him by his Roman name, Paul. Paul established churches throughout the region that is now Turkey and brought the gospel as far as Rome and Spain. He did suffer a lot in this work, and once he was stoned and left for dead.*

In 1 Timothy 1:15-16, Paul said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This saying is true, and it can be trusted. I was the worst sinner of all! But since I was worse than anyone else, God had mercy on me and let me be an example of the endless patience of Christ Jesus. He did this so that others would put their faith in Christ and have eternal life."

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescriptures.com

Passage Questions

Match the beginning with the correct ending. The first is done for you.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <u>_d_</u> 1. Saul wanted Stephen to die | a. he was being so cruel to him. |
| ___ 2. Pharisees were strict about the law | b. he said Jesus was the Son of God. |
| ___ 3. Saul went to Damascus | c. but they didn't understand God's love. |
| ___ 4. Jesus asked Saul why | d. because he followed the way of Jesus. |
| ___ 5. God told Ananias to go to Saul | e. because he wanted to arrest people. |
| ___ 6. Soon after Saul was baptized | f. and heal his eyes. |
| ___ 7. Saul said that God made him an example | g. to show His mercy and endless patience. |

Match the following words with their meanings. Write the correct letter on the line.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. _____ authority | a. a person who has special skill or knowledge |
| 2. _____ stoned | b. having no mercy or kindness |
| 3. _____ expert | c. separate and go in different directions |
| 4. _____ scatter | d. right to give orders |
| 5. _____ cruel | e. kill by throwing large stones at someone |
| 6. _____ strict | f. led by God's Spirit |
| 7. _____ baptized | g. severe in discipline |
| 8. _____ inspired | h. go through water to show a new faith in Jesus |

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. Do you think Saul was proud of being a Pharisee? Why or why not?
2. Why did the Sanhedrin turn against those who followed the way of Jesus Christ?
3. How did Saul try to destroy the church?
4. Why did Saul need letters from the high priest?
5. What happened to Saul on the way to Damascus?
6. Saul had never met Jesus. Why do you think that Jesus said, "Saul! Why are you so cruel to me?"
7. What did Jesus choose Saul to do?
8. What did Saul do in the rest of his life?

- *Intermediate*

1. Do you think Saul was proud of being a Pharisee? Why or why not?
2. Why did the Jerusalem Christians have to scatter to other places?
3. Why did Saul need to get letters from the high priest?
4. Saul may not even have met Jesus. Why do you think that Jesus said, "Saul! Why are you so cruel to me?"
5. Jesus told Ananias that He had chosen Saul for a purpose.
 - a. What was this purpose?
 - b. Do you think Saul fulfilled it in his life?

Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behavior

4.3 Saul, the Persecutor

6. Why do you think Saul called himself Paul when he went out to establish churches in far places?
7. Why is God patient with people? Why did He allow Saul to kill the Christians?
 - *Challenging*
 1. Why did Saul seek to persecute the church?
 2. Saul studied under Gamaliel, who warned the Sanhedrin about attacking Christ followers, "If their teaching is not from God, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop them; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." (Acts 5: 38-39)
 - a. How did Saul differ from his teacher, Gamaliel?
 - b. What do you know about the zealots in Judaism at the time?
 3. Why do you think that Saul was not content with just driving the church from Jerusalem?
 4. Do you think it was God's will to scatter the church? Why or why not?
 5. How long do you think God had been working on Saul?
 6. How was Saul well-suited for the task God had for him?
 7. Why is God patient with people? Why did He allow Saul to kill the Christians?

Rahab, the Prostitute, Part One

Joshua 2:1-24



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

In the Exodus of the Bible, God chose Moses to lead the ancient Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and back to Canaan. God said that they were to take that land because the Canaanites were doing evil things to worship their gods. They knew they would have to fight to **settle** in Canaan.

Joshua was a young Israelite at that time. From his youth, Joshua served Moses as an attendant. The Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness on their way to Canaan. During that time Joshua grew up and served Moses as a trustworthy leader. When

the millions of Israelites came to the mountains overlooking Canaan, Moses chose Joshua as his **successor**.

Before you read:

1. Have you ever been rescued from danger?
2. Do you know of anyone who risked their life to save their family?

The Passage

Joshua 2: ¹Joshua chose two men as **spies** and sent them from their camp at Acacia with these instructions: "Go across the river and find out as much as you can about the whole region, especially about the town of Jericho."

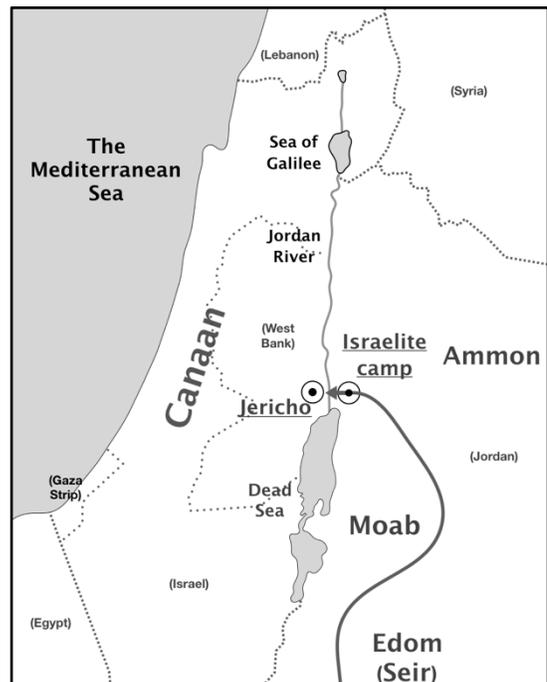
The two spies left the Israelite camp at Acacia and went to Jericho, where they decided to spend the night at the house of a **prostitute** named Rahab.

² But someone found out about them and told the king of Jericho, "Some Israelite men came here tonight, and they are spies." ³⁻⁷ So the king sent soldiers to Rahab's house to **arrest** the spies.

Meanwhile, Rahab had taken the men up to the flat roof of her house and had hidden them under some piles of **flax** plants that she had put there to dry. The soldiers came to her door and demanded, "Let us have the men who are staying at your house. They are spies."

She answered, "Some men did come to my house, but I didn't know where they had come from. They left about sunset, just before it was time to close the town gate. I don't know where they were going, but if you hurry, maybe you can catch them."

The guards at the town gate let the soldiers leave Jericho, but they closed the gate again as soon as the soldiers went through. Then the soldiers headed toward the Jordan River to look for the spies at the place where people cross the river.



⁸ Rahab went back up to her roof. The spies were still awake, so she told them: ⁹ "I know that the LORD has given Israel this land. Everyone **shakes with fear** because of you. ¹⁰ We heard how the LORD dried up the Red Sea so you could leave Egypt. And we heard how you destroyed Sihon and Og, those two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River. ¹¹ We know that the LORD your God rules heaven and earth, and we've lost our **courage** and our will to fight.

¹² Please promise me in the LORD's name that you will be as kind to my family as I have been to you. Do something to show ¹³ that you won't let your people kill my father and mother and my brothers and sisters and their families."

¹⁴ "Rahab," the spies answered, "if you keep quiet about what we're doing, we promise to be kind to you when the LORD gives us this land. We pray that the LORD will kill us if we don't keep our promise!"

¹⁵ Rahab's house was built into the town wall, and one of the windows in her house faced outside the wall. She gave the spies a rope, showed them the window, and said, "Use this rope to let yourselves down to the ground outside the wall. ¹⁶ Then hide in the hills. The men who are looking for you won't be able to find you there. They'll give up and come back after a few days, and you can be on your way."

¹⁷⁻²⁰ The spies said: "You made us promise to let you and your family live. We will keep our promise, but you can't tell anyone why we were here. You must tie this red rope on your window when we attack, and your father and mother, your brothers, and everyone else in your family must be here with you"...

²¹ "I'll do exactly what you said," Rahab promised. Then she sent them on their way and tied the red rope to the window.

²² The spies hid in the hills for three days while the king's soldiers looked for them along the roads. As soon as the soldiers gave up and returned to Jericho, ²³ the two spies went down into the Jordan valley and crossed the river. They reported to Joshua and told him everything that had happened. ²⁴ "We're sure the LORD has given us the whole country," they said. "The people there shake with fear every time they think of us."

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?

4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescriptures.com

Passage Questions

Change these False sentences to be True:

1. Rahab told the king about the spies.

2. She hid the men under some laundry.

3. Rahab didn't believe in God.

4. The people of Jericho were sure they'd be safe in their walled city.

5. Rahab begged the spies to save her own life.

6. The spies refused to help Rahab's family.

7. Rahab tied a yellow rope to her window.

Match the following words with their meanings. Write the correct letter on the line.

1. _____ to shake with fear

a. a person who takes money for sex

2. _____ spies

b. to capture a bad person

3. _____ flax

c. enemies who look for information

4. _____ arrest

d. to be very afraid

5. _____ prostitute

e. a plant that is used to make linen cloth

6. _____ courage

f. the next person to take over the job

Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession
5.1 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part One

7. _____ successor g. go and live in a place
8. _____ settle h. ability to act while afraid

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. After Moses died, Joshua was his _____.
2. God told the Israelites to _____ in Canaan.
3. The people of Jericho _____ because of the Israelites and their _____ left them.
4. Joshua sent some _____ to see what the enemy was like.
5. The king of Jericho tried to _____ the spies.
6. The spies stayed at a _____'s house.
7. Rahab hid them under some _____ plants.

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. What did Joshua tell his men to do?
2. Where did his men spend the night?
3. Where did Rahab hide the spies?
4. Why did Rahab want to help the spies?
5. What did Rahab make the spies promise?
6. How does this show that Rahab believed in God?
7. What did Rahab tie on her window to show where she lived?

- *Intermediate*

1. What did Joshua tell his men to do?

Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession
5.1 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part One

2. Where did his men spend the night? Why there?
3. Why do you think Rahab hid the spies?
4. Why did the soldiers head toward the Jordan River?
5. What did Rahab know about the Israelites and what was her response to this knowledge?
6. What did Rahab make the spies promise?
7. How does this show that Rahab believed in God?

- *Challenging*

1. What did Joshua tell his men to do? Was this a good plan?
2. Where did his men spend the night? Why there?
3. Why do you think Rahab hid the spies? How was her home well-suited as a hiding place?
4. Why did the soldiers head toward the Jordan River? Why would Rahab have suggested they go there?
5. What did Rahab know about the Israelites and what was her response to this knowledge? Was Rahab unusual among her people for having this response?
6. Do you think God moved her to think this way, or did she move God because she thought that way?
7. What did Rahab make the spies promise? What did this show about her?
8. How does this reveal Rahab's faith in God? In the Israelites? In the spies?

Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession

5.1 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part One

9. What did Rahab tie on her window to show where she lived? The Bible tells us the spies actually promised her, "Our lives for yours" if she or her family was harmed. What is the significance of that?

Rahab the Prostitute, Part Two

Joshua 6: 1-25



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

God had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham, his son Isaac, and their descendants. God told Abraham that his descendants would live in a land not their own (Egypt) and be enslaved there for four hundred years before He brought them back to Canaan. God also said the sin of the people of Canaan would reach its **limit** (Genesis 15:16) at that time.

The Canaanite tribes made their sons and daughters serve as temple prostitutes to their gods; they also burned their babies and **toddlers** as offerings to their gods (Deuteronomy 12, 18; Leviticus 18). When Joshua was about to attack Jericho, God told him to not **spare** anyone.

Yet God did spare one woman named Rahab from Jericho, and her family, because she trusted in God and saved two Israelite spies.

Before you read:

1. "One rotten apple spoils the whole barrel" is a proverb that means something or someone has caused what is good to become completely bad. *Can you think of a time when "one rotten apple spoiled the whole barrel"?*
2. What should be done with a 'rotten apple'?

The Passage

*The walls of Jericho were over three metres high, and 4 metres wide.*¹... The people of Jericho had been locking the gates in their town wall because they were afraid of the Israelites. No one could go out or come in.²⁻³ The LORD said to Joshua:

"With my help, you and your army will defeat the king of Jericho and his army, and you will capture the town. Here is how to do it: **March** slowly around Jericho once a day for six days.⁴ Take along the **sacred chest** and have seven priests walk in front of it, carrying **trumpets**. But on the seventh day, march slowly around the town seven times while the priests blow their trumpets.⁵ Then the priests will **blast** on their trumpets, and everyone else will shout. The wall will fall down, and your soldiers can go straight in from every side."

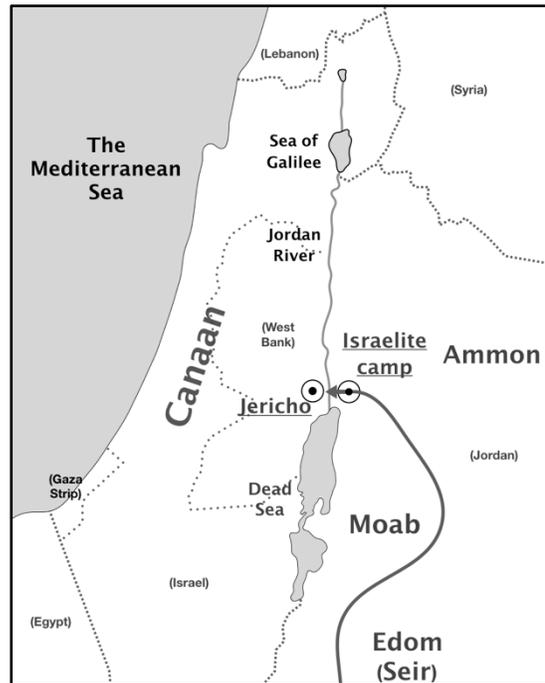
*Joshua gave the priests and the army their orders. He said, ...*¹⁰"Don't shout the battle cry or yell or even talk until the day I tell you to. Then let out a shout!"

As soon as Joshua finished giving the orders, the army started marching. One group of soldiers led the way, with seven priests marching behind them and blowing

trumpets. Then came the priests carrying the chest, followed by the rest of the soldiers.¹¹ They obeyed Joshua's orders and carried the chest once around the town before returning to camp for the night...¹⁴They did this once a day for six days.

¹⁵ On the seventh day, the army got up at **daybreak**. They marched slowly around Jericho the same as they had done for the past six days, except on this day they went around seven times. ¹⁶ Then the priests blew the trumpets, and Joshua yelled:

"Get ready to shout! The LORD will let you capture this town. ¹⁷ But you must destroy it and everything in it, to show that it now belongs to the LORD. The woman Rahab helped the spies we sent, so protect her and the others who are inside her house. But kill everyone else in the town. ¹⁸⁻¹⁹ The silver and gold and everything made of bronze and iron belong to the LORD and must be put in his **treasury**. Be careful to follow these instructions, because if you see something you want and take it, the LORD will destroy Israel. And it will be all your fault."



²⁰ The priests blew their trumpets again, and the soldiers shouted as loud as they could. The walls of Jericho fell flat. Then the soldiers rushed up the hill, went straight into the town, and captured it. ²¹⁻²⁵ They killed everyone, men and women, young and old, everyone except Rahab and the others in her house. They even killed every cow, sheep, and donkey.

Joshua said to the two men who had been spies, "Rahab kept you safe when I sent you to Jericho. We promised to protect her and her family, and we will keep that promise. Now go into her house and bring them out."

The two men went into Rahab's house and brought her out, along with her father and mother, her brothers, and her other relatives. Rahab and her family had to stay in a place just outside the Israelite army camp. But later they were allowed to live among the Israelites...

When the Israelites left Egypt, God gave Moses an assistant named Nashon, the leader of the tribe of Judah. Nashon had a son named Salmon. Salmon married Rahab. They had a son named Boaz. Boaz had a son named Obed. Obed had a son named

Jesse. Jesse was the father of King David. And so it was that through Rahab's family, the Messiah, the Son of David, would come.

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescriptures.com

Passage Questions

Put the story in the right order. The first one is done for you.

- a) On the 7th day, the Israelites marched around the city 7 times. _____
- b) The walls of Jericho fell down flat. _____
- c) The two spies safely brought out Rahab and her family. _____
- d) God told Joshua exactly how to destroy Jericho. 1
- e) The soldiers killed everyone else in the city. _____
- f) Joshua ordered the priests and the army to march quietly around the city for six days. _____
- g) Joshua ordered the priests to blast the trumpets and the army to shout. _____
- h) Salmon married Rahab, and their descendant David became king. _____

Match the following words with their meanings. Write the correct letter on the line.

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. _____ march | a. farthest point |
| 2. _____ limit | b. children 1 - 2 years old. |
| 3. _____ trumpets | c. a place where a lot of money is |
| 4. _____ blast | d. musical instruments |

Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession
5.2 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part Two

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 5. _____ toddlers | e. walk together like soldiers |
| 6. _____ treasury | f. a sudden loud noise |
| 7. _____ sacred chest | g. time when sun rises |
| 8. _____ daybreak | h. a box that holds things for God |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. The Canaanites burned babies and _____ alive, and God said their sin had reached its _____.
2. The priests were to carry their _____ the first six days.
3. At _____ on the seventh day they began to _____ around the city seven times.
4. On the seventh day the priests had to _____ their _____.
5. All the silver, gold, bronze, and iron had to go in the LORD's _____.

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. Why did the people of Jericho lock their gates?
2. What did God promise Joshua?
3. What were God's instructions to Joshua?
4. What happened to the people and animals of Jericho? Why did God want this?
5. What happened to Rahab and her family?
6. Why do you think God would choose a Canaanite prostitute to be in the family of Jesus the Messiah?

- *Intermediate*

1. How did the people of Jericho protect themselves?
2. What did God promise Joshua?
3. What do you think about God's instructions to Joshua?
4. What did God warn the Israelites not to do? Why is this significant?
5. What happened to the walls of Jericho when the Israelites shouted? Why was this unusual?
6. What happened to the people and animals of Jericho? Why did God want this?
7. What happened to Rahab and her family? What does this show about God?

- *Challenging*

1. How did the people of Jericho protect themselves? What were they trusting in?
2. What did God promise Joshua? Why did Joshua believe God?
3. What do you think about God's instructions to Joshua? Does it take more faith to follow simple instructions or complex ones?
4. What did God warn the Israelites not to do? Why is this significant? How did this build their relationship with God?
5. What happened to the walls of Jericho when the Israelites shouted? Why was this unusual? What is the significance of this?
6. What happened to the people and animals of Jericho? Do you think that was fair? Why did God want to destroy them?

Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession

5.2 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part Two

7. What happened to Rahab and her family? What does this show about God? In Matthew 1, Rahab is mentioned by name as one of Jesus' ancestors. Why do you think God moved Matthew to do thi

Matthew the Tax Collector

Matthew 9:9-10; 10:1-3



Illustrations by Annie Yang

Background:

At the time of this story, the area of Judea was controlled by the Romans. Rome collected taxes to maintain and expand its power. The tax collectors made money by charging an extra **fee** that Rome let them keep for themselves. This extra fee could be as much as they wanted it to be, and they were allowed to use force to take it. To the Jews, any countryman who would take such a job had **betrayed** his people. Tax collectors were not allowed to enter a synagogue or the Temple.

This story takes place early in Jesus' ministry, and Jesus has already called some of his disciples to follow him. He is living in Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee. Matthew's birth name was Levi. He was a Jew who worked in the city of Capernaum as a tax collector for the **occupying** Roman government that the Jews hated.

Before you read:

1. Jesus said he didn't come to call good people, but sinners. Which kind do you think most people are? Which do you think you are?

The Passage

⁹ As Jesus was leaving, he saw a tax collector named Matthew sitting at the place for paying taxes. Jesus said to him, "Come with me." Matthew got up and went with him.

¹⁰ Later, Jesus and his disciples were having dinner at Matthew's house. Many tax collectors and other sinners were also there. ¹¹ Some Pharisees asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and other sinners?"

¹² Jesus heard them and answered, "Healthy people don't need a doctor, but sick people do. ¹³ Go and learn what the Scriptures mean when they say, 'Instead of offering sacrifices to me, I want you to be **merciful** to others.' I didn't come to invite good people to be my followers. I came to invite sinners" (Matt. 9:9-13).



Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession
5.3 Matthew, the Tax Collector

"¹Jesus called together his twelve disciples. He gave them the power to force out evil spirits and to **heal** every kind of disease and sickness. ² The first of the twelve **apostles** was Simon, better known as Peter. His brother Andrew was an apostle, and so were James and John, the two sons of Zebedee. ³ Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew the tax collector, James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus were also apostles. ⁴ The others were Simon, known as the Eager One*, and Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus" (Matt. 10:1-4).

Jesus talked about tax collectors when he was teaching the people:

¹⁰ Two men went into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood over by himself and prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not greedy, dishonest, and unfaithful in marriage like other people. And I am really glad that I am not like that tax collector over there. ¹² I go without eating for two days a week, and I give you one tenth of all I earn."

¹³ The tax collector stood off at a distance and did not think he was good enough even to look up toward heaven. He was so sorry for what he had done that he pounded his chest and prayed, "God, have pity on me! I am such a sinner."

¹⁴ Then Jesus said, "When the two men went home, it was the tax collector and not the Pharisee who was pleasing to God. If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you **humble** yourself, you will be honoured." (Luke 18: 10 - 14)

*It was Matthew the tax collector who would write the book of Matthew in the Bible. In his gospel, he quoted the Old Testament ninety-nine times. Even though he was a religious **outcast**, and worked against his own people, he still believed in God and studied the Scriptures deeply on his own. He was not allowed in the synagogue or the Temple, but he knew and understood the prophecies about the Messiah in the Scriptures. That day in Capernaum of Galilee, when he saw Jesus, he immediately walked away from his wealth and into an unknown future.*

* the Zealot

What Do You Think?¹

1. What do you like about this story? Why?
2. What questions might someone have about this story?
3. What do you learn about people from this story?
4. What do you learn about God from this story?

Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession
5.3 Matthew, the Tax Collector

¹ Questions taken from www.storyingthescriptures.com

Passage Questions

True or False

1. Matthew asked Jesus for help. _____
2. Jesus ate at Matthew's house one night. _____
3. Jesus told them healthy people don't need a doctor. _____
4. Jesus came to invite good people to be his followers. _____
5. The Pharisee thought he was better than the tax collector. _____
6. Jesus said that God accepted the good Pharisee. _____
7. Matthew wrote the book of Matthew in the Bible. _____
8. Matthew was an apostle. _____

Match the following words with their meanings. Write the correct letter on the line.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. _____ heal | a. payment |
| 2. _____ betrayed | b. followers who Jesus specially chose |
| 3. _____ merciful | c. being kind especially if someone has hurt you |
| 4. _____ apostles | d. to cure a sickness |
| 5. _____ fee | e. pretended to be a friend but then hurt someone |
| 6. _____ occupying | f. someone not accepted by others |
| 7. _____ outcast | g. to put (someone) in a low place |
| 8. _____ to humble | h. staying in a place that is not really yours |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. Jesus said to be _____ to others.
2. Jesus gave apostles power to _____ sick people.
3. Judas Iscariot _____ Jesus.
4. Tax collectors could force people to pay them an extra _____.

Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession
5.3 Matthew, the Tax Collector

5. Matthew was an _____ because he worked for the _____ forces of Rome.
6. Jesus said that if you _____ yourself, you will be honoured.
7. The _____ were a group of men chosen by Jesus.

Discussion

- *Easier*

1. What did Jesus say to Matthew?
2. What did the Pharisees complain about?
3. What did Jesus say about sinners?
4. What did Jesus tell the Pharisees to do?
5. What power did Jesus give to his disciples?
6. Who were the apostles of Jesus?
7. What do you know about what the apostles did later?
8. How does Jesus treat sinners? Why do you think God accepts sinners who want to change?

- *Intermediate*

1. What did Jesus say to Matthew? How would this affect his disciples?
2. What did the Pharisees complain about? Why would they be upset by this?
3. What did Jesus say about sinners? Why does He want to show them mercy?
4. What did Jesus tell the Pharisees to do? Why is this significant? Do we have the same problem of ignoring inconvenient Scriptures?

5. What power did Jesus give to his disciples? Do you think this power was given to all his disciples?
6. Who were the apostles of Jesus? Why were these people important to God's kingdom?
7. Why do you think the tax collector in Jesus' story was accepted by God? What problem does the Pharisee have that makes him unacceptable? Do people still have this problem?

- *Challenging*

1. What did Jesus say to Matthew? Why was this a bit surprising?
2. What did the Pharisees complain about? Why?
3. What did Jesus say about sinners? Why was this important to understand?
4. What did Jesus tell the Pharisees to do? Why is this significant? Would they be offended by this saying?
5. What power did Jesus give to his disciples? Do you think this power was given to all his disciples?
6. Who were the apostles of Jesus? Why were these people important to God's kingdom?
7. Why do you think the tax collector in Jesus' story was accepted by God? What problem does the Pharisee have that makes him unacceptable? Do people still have this problem?

