

ESL Workbook  
(Teacher's Guide)

Outsiders Whom God Chose

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## Advice to Teachers/Facilitators

### How to Prepare for Class:

Make sure to spend time praying before beginning your preparations. Pray for wisdom in how to conduct the class, sensitivity towards the students, grace and favour. Pray that the students would learn about God.

Read over the materials a day or two before the lesson. Give yourself plenty of time to think about the content. Ask God to reveal truth to you.

Work through all the questions and answers. Select the questions you feel led to use. If you can't answer it, either research it (be careful to use reliable sources) or don't ask it. The answer guide is provided to help you.

Write up a brief lesson plan, including how many minutes each section might take. This will help you move the lesson along.

### How to Use Materials

#### The Student Workbook

The materials are essentially in six parts: the background, the pre-reading question (s), the scripture passage, the What do you Think? discussion, the English exercise questions, and the discussion questions.

The illustrations used in lesson questions are designed to show the key events in the story. These can be used as a post reading exercise, where the students can summarize the story in their own words.

Each chapter begins with useful background information about the text: i.e. purpose, author, place in history, etc. This is followed by one or two questions in Before You Read. These are meant to get students thinking about the topic and help them access their prior knowledge.

The 'What Do You Think' reaction questions were developed by OMF for their method of telling the gospel through Bible stories. They are meant to encourage student interaction with God's Word and get them thinking. ***There are no wrong answers to these questions.*** However, if someone seems way off base, you might ask how they got that answer, or ask for other ideas from the class. There likely won't be time for every student to answer every question, but hopefully you will get some responses.

The exercise questions (True/False, Matching, Circle the Answer, Fill in the Blanks, etc.) are designed to help the students comprehend the story through repetition of key ideas and familiarity with the vocabulary. It has been shown that ESL students learn best when they have these kinds of exercise questions to do. The exercise questions are most useful for the Easier or Intermediate levels.

The discussion questions are divided into three sections: Easier, Intermediate, and Challenging. These levels are decided by the amount of fluency in English the student may have. The Easier questions are more fact based and the Challenging questions are more opinion/discussion in their orientation. The Intermediate questions are a mixture of both. Feel free to mix and match to suit your group.

### The Teacher's Guide Answer Key

The answer keys to the questions are guidelines only. Be careful to give scriptural answers not just your own ideas or things you have been taught. Let Scripture explain Scripture. Sometimes you might have to explain the culture of the times. We have added notes to help but for some things you might need more research. In that case ask the assistance of your pastor or use a well-known and accepted authority such as Matthew Henry's commentary.

## How to Manage the Class

### Organizing Groups

Allow students to join the group they feel most comfortable in. Sometimes a student will choose an easier group. If someone answers all the questions and seems to understand everything, suggest they join a more challenging group or ask them to be your assistant in translating or explaining. If a student is very quiet or looks totally lost suggest an easier group. Don't refer to it as a "lower" group.

### Leading a Group

Make sure everyone knows your name and you know the name of all the students. (Name tags help). Be sure to welcome newcomers to the group. Take a few minutes to greet everyone and ask them how their week is going. Open the lesson with a prayer. Ask God for guidance and wisdom and that the students will understand.

### Participation Issues

Allow the students to speak as much as possible. Guide them gently if they are mistaken. Never make any one feel embarrassed for giving the wrong answer.

Acknowledge the part of the answer is correct or say something like: "Yeah, a lot of people would agree with you but actually...".

It's a good idea to have everyone participate even just a little. This can be achieved by having everyone read a section of the story out loud. When people are reading, and mispronounce a word, correct them but don't over-correct. Don't correct more than three times. If they mispronounce a Bible name, tell them the usual way we say that name but remind them that these names are not English.

Don't force someone to answer a question. If no one volunteers to answer, don't answer them yourself. For factual questions ask the students to look at the story to see if they can find the answer there. For opinions, remind them that their opinions should be supported by facts from the story.

### First Time Visitors

If there are new people joining the group allow them to listen and join in when they feel comfortable. Ask simpler questions of the newcomers to build their confidence in speaking out. Never put a visitor on the spot.

### Managing the Outspoken

Some people are very enthusiastic and love to jump in right away with their answers; others may love attention or are very competitive. Whatever the motivation, it can be very destructive to the learning to have one person dominating the discussion. Make sure you control how much any one person contributes- make sure everyone has a chance to speak. Be kind and polite but redirect the question to another person. For example: "That's a great thought, Sam! Let's hear what Peter thinks about that."

Also, sometimes there are volunteers or helpers assisting the group. Be sure to discuss prior to class what their role should be - assisting, not answering the questions or discussing side issues.

### Managing the Too Quiet

Some people think it's rude to be too forward or are shy by nature. Encourage these people to speak. Ask them easy questions at first and follow it by a "what-do- you- think- about- that" sort of question.

### Managing a Larger Group

In a larger group, some people don't get heard so it is valuable to break into smaller groups for discussions. This works better at the Intermediate or Advanced Levels. For Basic Levels this can be done if there is an assistant to lead a smaller group.

## Concluding and Following Up

It is very important to conclude the class on a positive note. If people have fun and enjoy being with each other, they will learn a lot and they will want to come back.

Make sure to refer to the lesson completed this week in the next class and ask the students whether it was helpful to them and what did they learn.

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## Esther, Queen of Persia, part one

## Esther 1-2

### Background:

#### The Babylonian Exile

In the days of King Rehoboam, Solomon's son, Israel split apart in a civil war. The ten northern tribes broke away and set up their own king (Jeroboam I) and their own capital city (Samaria) but kept the name Israel for their kingdom. The two remaining southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, kept the Davidic king (Rehoboam), the original capital city (Jerusalem), and took the name Judah.

Of the 19 kings of the northern kingdom of Israel, all were wicked. Around 722 BC, the Assyrians - the first superpower to rule the entire region - conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and sent its people into exile throughout the Assyrian empire. Those were the Israelites that became called the "10 lost tribes".

Of the 20 kings of the southern kingdom of Judah, 12 were wicked and 8 were good. Around 598 BC, the Babylonians - the next superpower to rule the region - conquered Judah and took its people into exile. But unlike the Assyrians who scattered their captives, the Babylonians kept the exiles together in Babylon.

When the Medo-Persian Empire (often just called the Persian Empire) conquered the Babylonian Empire, they allowed all the peoples taken captive by the Babylonians to return to their homelands. But only 50,000 people of Judah (from which the name "Jews" came) chose to return to Judah and rebuild Jerusalem. (Among those who returned were Nehemiah, Ezra, and Zerubbabel.)

There had been several prophecies by both Isaiah and Jeremiah about this return to Judah. About 150 years before the Persians conquered Babylon, Isaiah had prophesied that the day of Cyrus (who would be the King of Persia) would come, and he would free the Jews from their exile (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). Isaiah also told the Jews to leave Babylon when that happened. (Isa. 48:20). Jeremiah had prophesied that Babylon would last 70 years after which God would bring the Jews back to Judah. (Jer. 29:10).

The story of Esther happened after the Jews had returned to rebuild Judah. Mordecai and Esther, the main characters of this story, were among the majority of Jews who chose to stay in Persia (now Iran).

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.1 Esther, Queen of Persia, part one

#### 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 first question is to get students thinking about how identity might be a reason for persecution. The second is to have them consider the cultural background of this story and give you an understanding of where students are coming from. [You may wish to only do one question.] Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

#### What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

#### Passage Questions

##### True or False

1. Xerxes was a Babylonian king.  
*Xerxes was the Persian king*
2. The Persian Empire only controlled Persian people.  
*The Empire included many different peoples from North Africa to Arabia and India.*
3. Xerxes was thinking clearly when he ordered Vashti to join his party.  
*Xerxes was "happy with so much wine" when he gave the order for Vashti to join his drunken party.*
4. Hadassah asked to go to the palace.  
*She was taken to the palace by the king's officers.*
5. Esther told Xerxes that she was Jewish.  
*Esther told no one that she was Jewish, because Mordecai told her not to tell.*

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 ✓

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.1 Esther, Queen of Persia, part one

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

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

- *Easier*

1. How large was the Persian Empire?  
It extended from eastern Libya and Egypt to China, and from the Caucasus and parts of Greece and Bulgaria to the Persian Gulf and Pakistan.
2. Who was Xerxes?  
The king of the Persian Empire
3. Who was Vashti?  
She was the queen of Persia, Xerxes' main wife.

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.1 Esther, Queen of Persia, part one

4. **Why did Xerxes ask Vashti to come to his party?**  
He wanted to show off her beauty.
5. **What did the nobles tell Xerxes to do? Why did they want him to do this?**  
To make a new law that a disobedient wife could be divorced or 'sent away permanently'. They were afraid that Vashti would set a bad example for their wives, and so their wives would be disobedient too.
6. **Why was Xerxes angry with Vashti?**  
She refused to obey his order to come to his party. (He was also drunk, and he may have been easily angered.)
7. **Do you think Vashti was right to refuse to obey Xerxes?**  
She was directly disobeying the king of Persia. But she was being careful and modest by preventing herself from being ogled by hundreds of drunken men.
8. **What was the difference between Jewish and Persian religions? How would this affect the choice of a Jewish queen of Persia.**  
The Jews worshipped only one God, the true God. The Persians were polytheistic. This could create problems in the Persian palace if Esther didn't worship the Persian gods.
9. **Was Xerxes happy with Esther? How do you know?**  
Yes, he gave a big party for all his family and rulers and made the day a national holiday.
10. **Do you think Esther was happy to become the queen of Persia?**  
She would have wealth, servants, status. But she must have been lonely being cut off from her family and her people. She missed out on marriage with someone who followed God and children that she could raise in Jewish tradition.

- *Intermediate*

1. **How large was the Persian Empire?**  
It stretched from parts of Libya and Egypt in the west to parts of Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan in the east; from Georgia in the north to the Arabian sea and Pakistan to the south.
2. **What did you learn about the king's parties in this story?**  
They lasted a long time and included large numbers of people. They were opulent - the guests drank from gold cups and sat on couches made of marble, gold, and silver. His party in honour of his marriage to Esther was a national holiday.
3. **Was Vashti right to refuse to come to Xerxes' party?**

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.1 Esther, Queen of Persia, part one

Vashti may have been modest enough to not want her beauty shown off, and wise enough to not want to be put on exhibit in front of so many drunken officials. But she was maybe not tactful in her refusal to obey and did not show respect for Xerxes before all his officials.

**4. Was Xerxes wise to divorce Vashti? Why or why not?**

Since he missed her, he regretted what he had done - so he wasn't wise to divorce her. He was drunk at the time.

However, if her intention was to show open disrespect for her husband - and king of Persia - then perhaps he was right to divorce her.

**5. Why did Esther enter the palace "beauty contest"?**

Likely, she had no choice, she was just taken by the Persian officials into the palace. If she was an observant Jew, she would not have wanted to be taken into the harem of a Gentile ruler and have to "spend the night" with him while he decided who to marry. If she had not been chosen as queen, she would have become part of his harem. But women were marginalized with few rights.

Mordecai would not have been able to fight against this Persian cultural attitude of the times. He did frequently try to check on her though.

**6. What were the differences between the Jewish and Persian religions? Why would Mordecai have asked Esther to not tell Xerxes her nationality?**

At the time, the Persians worshipped many gods, but Judaism worshipped only one God, the true God. This could create problems in the Persian palace because Persian customs were not being honoured.

**7. Do you think that Esther was happy? Why or why not?**

She had no choice in being taken into the harem, nor in whether she wanted to be Xerxes queen. But she seems to have decided to accept this and determine to be a good queen and make her own happiness. This is shown in the favour that was given to her by the head of the harem, and in her good relations with her servants, Xerxes, and Mordecai.

**8. The Persians conquered and extended the Babylonian Empire. Why would nations want to become empires, ruling over such a large region?**

This would give them access to shipping ports and trade routes, and control over the trade in the region and so increase their treasuries. It would also increase the size of their armies and so protect them from attack from other would-be superpowers.

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.1 Esther, Queen of Persia, part one

- *Challenging*

1. **What are some of the other empires that have been in the world?**  
The Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Ptolemaic, Seleucid, Roman, Byzantine, Sasanian, Mongol, Arab Caliphates ...
2. **The Persians conquered and extended the Babylonian Empire. Why would nations want to become empires, ruling over such a large region?**  
This would give them access to shipping ports and trade routes, and control over the trade in the region and so increase their treasuries. It would also increase the size of their armies and so protect them from attack from other would-be superpowers.
3. **Is it good for kings to drink from gold cups? Why or why not?**  
This is for discussion. Perhaps it shows honour to the king to give him a gold cup. Perhaps it shows greediness and an unhealthy desire for pleasure on the king's part to be so extravagant.
4. **What did you learn about king Xerxes from this story?**  
He certainly likes to party! He was extravagant; his guests drank from gold cups and could have as much as they wished to drink. He liked to get drunk. He did ask for advice, asking his officials what should be done to Vashti, and taking their advice to have a "beauty contest" for his next queen. He was generous, for he made his wedding day a national holiday. But he was such a large spender that he must have caused a strain on national finances.  
Historians say that this Xerxes may have been Xerxes the Great (486-465 BC, the grandson of Cyrus the Great; but he may have been Xerxes' the Great's son (Artaxerxes I) or grandson (Artaxerxes II).
5. **Was Vashti right to refuse to go to the party? Why or why not?**  
This is open for discussion. Most likely she was modest and did not want to be put on display by the king. She was probably also wise enough to not want to be ogled by drunken men at the party. But she still needed to be respectful and tactful to Xerxes in how she said no to his request. She may have been disrespectful in her refusal and that may have been what upset the rulers, especially since she was the role model for the Persian women.
6. **What differences were there between the Jewish and the Persian gods? Why would Mordecai tell Esther to not tell anyone her nationality?**  
The Jews worshipped one God, while the Persians worshipped many different gods. Mordecai may have realized that the Persians would not accept a queen who did

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.1 Esther, Queen of Persia, part one

not honour Persian gods. In part 2 of Esther, we will see Haman use the fact that Mordecai was Jewish to seek the death all the Jews in Persia.

7. All the beautiful women gathered to the palace went into Xerxes' harem. How do you think Esther felt about this?

Likely, she had no choice, she was just taken by the Persian officials into the palace. If she was an observant Jew, she would not have wanted to be taken into the harem of a Gentile ruler and have to "spend the night" with him while he decided who to marry. If she had not been chosen as queen, she would have become part of his harem. But women were marginalized with few rights.

Mordecai would not have been able to fight against this Persian cultural attitude of the times. He did frequently check on her though.

8. Do you think that Esther was happy with Xerxes? Why or why not?

She had no choice in being taken into the harem, nor in whether she wanted to be Xerxes' queen. But she seems to have decided to accept this and determine to be a good queen and make her own happiness. This is shown in the favour that was given to her by the head of the harem, and in her good relations with her servants, and with Xerxes, and Mordecai.

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?

Answers will vary. There were several specific prophecies (Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel) given to the Jews that the Babylonian exiles would return, and that it was God's will for them to do so. The Jews who stayed in Persia, rather than return and rebuild, were either not aware of the prophecies, or indifferent to the will of God. Yet we see God still acting to save His disobedient people. That's because He still calls them His, whether they obey or not. When God made His covenant with Abraham, only God ratified it (by walking between the carcasses) - He put Abe fast asleep. So, the Abrahamic covenant depended only on God's commitment to His people, not on their obedience to Him.

The church has the same type of relationship. We are His people based on what Jesus did for us, not us for Him. Though He disciplines us, He continues to love us and be committed to us even when we disobey.

## Esther, Queen of Persia, part two

Esther 3 -9

### Background:

#### The Babylonian Exile

In the days of King Rehoboam, Solomon's son, Israel split apart in a civil war. The ten northern tribes broke away and set up their own king (Jeroboam I) and their own capital city (Samaria) but kept the name Israel for their kingdom. The two remaining southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, kept the Davidic king (Rehoboam), the original capital city (Jerusalem), and took the name Judah.

Of the 19 kings of the northern kingdom of Israel, all were wicked. Around 722 BC, the Assyrians - the first superpower to rule the entire region - conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and sent its people into exile throughout the Assyrian empire. Those were the Israelites that became called the "10 lost tribes".

Of the 20 kings of the southern kingdom of Judah, 12 were wicked and 8 were good. Around 598 BC, the Babylonians - the next superpower to rule the region - conquered Judah and took its people into exile. But unlike the Assyrians who scattered their captives, the Babylonians kept the exiles together in Babylon.

The next superpower to rule the region was the Medo-Persian Empire (often just called the Persian Empire). They allowed all the peoples taken captive by the Babylonians to return to their homelands. The Judahites (from which the name "Jews" came) were now free to return from Babylon to Judah and rebuild, but only about 50,000 of them chose to do so. Among them were the great Nehemiah, Ezra, and Zerubbabel.

There had been several prophecies by both Isaiah and Jeremiah about this return to Judah. About 150 years before the Persians conquered Babylon, Isaiah had prophesied that the day of King Cyrus of Persia would come, and he would free the Jews from their exile (Isa. 44:28; 45:1). Isaiah also told the Jews to leave Babylon when that happened. (Isa. 48:20). Jeremiah had prophesied that Babylon would last 70 years after which God would bring the Jews back to Judah. (Jer. 29:10).

The story of Esther happened after the Jews had returned to rebuild Judah. Mordecai and Esther, then, were among the majority who apparently lacked interest in or awareness of God's will. But the Abrahamic covenant was a one-sided; it depended only on God's commitment to His people, not on their commitment to Him (Genesis 15). He delivers them and makes His name known throughout the Persian Empire.



### Before you read:

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

The purpose of these questions is to have students understand Esther's position and what was at stake in her risk. Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

### What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

### Passage Questions

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

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

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.2 Esther, Queen of Persia, part two

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

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

### • *Easier*

1. How did the other officials show respect for Haman?  
They bowed down to him every time he passed by.
2. Why did Haman not like Mordecai?  
Mordecai refused to show honour to Haman by bowing to him. Haman's pride was wounded. Also, Haman was a descendant of the Amalekites who had been long-time enemies of the Israelites. The Israelites had won in battle over them. So, Haman would dislike Mordecai for being a Judahite as well.
3. What lie did Haman tell to King Xerxes? Was anything true that he said?  
He said that 'these people' refused to obey the king's laws, which was not true. It was true that they had different customs, because they would only worship the God of Heaven. Haman did not name the people, so he was not telling the whole

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.2 Esther, Queen of Persia, part two

truth. Haman was seeking his own agenda and using Xerxes to accomplish it. His actions brought trouble to the Persian people and to Xerxes.

**4. How did Mordecai show his feelings about the order to kill his people?**

He went out in public, tore his clothes, wore sackcloth and put ashes on his head. These were all ways that people would mourn at a funeral or show grief for a dead loved one. (Even today, some cultures, such as China, wear sackcloth at funerals. Traditional Jews still tear their clothing.)

**5. How did Esther and Mordecai communicate with each other?**

They sent a messenger back and forth between them. They must have trusted this messenger.

**6. Why did Esther want people to go without eating before she went to the king?**

To go without eating -fasting- was part of praying to God. (Some of your Christian and Muslim students might know this.) Esther needed God to save her and her people. She knew that even the queen could not approach the king uninvited. To approach the king uninvited was punishable by death. And since the king had not asked to see her in 30 days, she did not know whether he still liked her, and whether he would have her killed.

**7. What did the king do when Esther went to the court uninvited?**

He extended his sceptre to her, which meant he was allowing her to approach him with her request and sparing her from the death penalty for having done so.

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

She may be purposely building curiosity and suspense in Xerxes so that he will see that her request will be something of importance. She may be stalling for time while she thinks of how to tell Xerxes about Haman's plot - or waiting for God's words to tell Xerxes.

She may be using the banquets as a time to establish an affectionate reconnection with Xerxes (who hadn't asked for her company in 30 days) before presenting her request.

**9. What happened to Mordecai?**

Xerxes gave Mordecai his signet ring, making him the chief official - the position that Haman had held. (Not in this text: Xerxes had been recently reminded that Mordecai had saved his life. Esther 6:1-2) Esther told Xerxes that Mordecai was her relative. She probably also told him that Mordecai had raised her when she was orphaned.

- *Intermediate*

1. **How did Haman respond to Mordecai's refusal to bow? Why did Haman do this?**  
Haman was so angry that he decided not only to kill Mordecai, but all his people (the Judahites (Jews)) as well. This could be because Haman was an Amalekite, a people who were ancient enemies of the Israelites and whom God told the Israelites to destroy completely. So, Haman would have a hatred for the people of Judah and would be especially infuriated to learn that a Judahite (Mordecai) was refusing to honour him.
2. **How much of the truth was Haman telling when he asked the king to get rid of a whole culture and people?**  
He said that 'these people' refused to obey the king's laws, which was not true. It was true that they had different customs, because they would only worship the God of Heaven. Haman did not name the people, so he was not telling the whole truth. Haman was seeking his own agenda and using Xerxes to accomplish it. His actions brought trouble to the Persian people and to Xerxes.
3. **Was Esther sure that Xerxes loved her? Why or why not?**  
She was probably unsure of Xerxes' regard for her. He had not asked for her company in 30 days so it would seem he had not missed her in all that time. He had a huge harem to occupy himself with. And he loved to party with the men.
4. **Why might Esther have invited Xerxes and Haman to two banquets before telling Xerxes her request?**  
She may be purposely building curiosity and suspense in Xerxes so that he will see that her request will be something of importance. She may be stalling for time while she thinks of how to tell Xerxes about Haman's plot - or waiting for God's words to tell Xerxes.  
She may be using the banquets as a time to establish an affectionate reconnection with Xerxes (who hadn't asked for her company in 30 days) before presenting her request.  
It turned out that when she did tell Xerxes about Haman, it was a timing that had a great impact on him.
5. **What did you learn about Haman's character from this story?**  
Haman demanded homage from everyone and anyone. His ego was so great that having even one person refuse this homage became an obsession for him. He was vindictive, he wanted to not only kill Mordecai, but all the Jews in Persia. He was a plotter, planning how he would have the Persians carry out the genocide by setting aside one day for it and promising them the "spoils" of war. He was manipulative; he offered bags of silver to Xerxes as a bribe to carry out his plan.

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.2 Esther, Queen of Persia, part two

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

She must have had impressive character for she became the favourite of the eunuch who was in charge of the harem. Her servants were loyal to her, fasting with her. She became the favourite of Xerxes, though she had only spent one night with him.

She showed humility by obeying Mordecai who had raised her by both obeying his request to not tell Xerxes that she was Jewish when he married her, and by going to Xerxes at the risk of her life when Mordecai later asked her to fight for her people.

She was courageous in risking her life for the sake of her people. She was a woman of faith for she asked Mordecai to gather the people to fast and pray for her before she went to the king. She also did the same herself. And she apparently waited for God's timing to tell Xerxes about Haman's plot.

Yes, it looks like God hand-picked her for the position of queen. He knows the end from the beginning.

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 said this was a great idea and told Haman to go do this for Mordecai.

- a. How many other 'coincidences' about timing are in this story?

Vashti was divorced. Palace staff liked Esther best of all the young women. Esther was chosen as queen out of so many women before the planned massacre.

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

Answers will vary here. But God is in control of all things, and when you look back on events, you can see it was His hand that shaped it, not coincidence.

8. Was Xerxes a good king? Why or why not?

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.2 Esther, Queen of Persia, part two

Answers vary. He was a party-animal, and though he sought advice, he took passed decrees without thinking things through. Historical records show that his contemporaries thought of him as a foolish king. But in this story, he was good to Esther. He was not so proud that he refused to admit he was wrong.

9. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah told the Jews that Judah would be conquered by the Babylonian Empire because they rejected God. These prophets also said that Babylonian Empire would be conquered by the Persians. Jeremiah told them when this would happen. Isaiah told them the name of the Persian king who would set them free.

a) Why did the Jews not listen to the prophets?

They either hadn't been taught what the prophets said, or weren't interested in what they said, or thought their own way was better.

b) Why did God still protect the Jews?

This is an example of His grace and His commitment to his people. They were disobedient in rejecting Him, but still He chose to keep them safe. His covenant with them was based on His promise, not on their works. He made His name known throughout the Persian Empire by His action in saving His people. Through His people He gave all humanity the chance to belong to Him by sending Messiah to the world.

10. This story does not mention God. So why did the early church include it in the Bible?

Because this story shows God's character in how He relates to His imperfect people through his actions. God's intervention ensured that Jesus the Messiah would be born among the descendants of Abraham into the family of David. His covenant with us is one-sided as well, depending on Jesus' work at the cross and not our own works. He loves us and is committed to us despite our failures.

- *Challenging*

1. Why might Mordecai have refused to show respect to Haman?

Mordecai was a Judahite, and Haman was an Amalekite. The Amalekites had been ancient enemies of the Israelites, and Mordecai may have refused to show respect for Haman because of this.

Mordecai was also an official in the palace, so he may have had first-hand knowledge of Haman's despicable character and refused to honour him because of that.

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### 1.2 Esther, Queen of Persia, part two

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

He said that 'these people' refused to obey the king's laws, which was not true. It was true that they had different customs, because they would only worship the God of Heaven. Haman did not name the people, so he was not telling the whole truth. Haman was seeking his own agenda and using Xerxes to accomplish it. His actions brought trouble to the Persian people and to Xerxes.

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?

He did not want to give the Persians, or Xerxes, a chance to change their minds about annihilating the Jews. By choosing one day, he would build up expectation in the Persian population, and maximum fear for the Jews.

4. What reasons might Esther have had for choosing to invite Xerxes and Haman to two banquets before telling Xerxes her request?

She may be purposely building curiosity and suspense in Xerxes so that he will see that her request will be something of importance. She may be stalling for time while she thinks of how to tell Xerxes about Haman's plot - or waiting for God's words to tell Xerxes. She may be using the banquets as a time to establish an affectionate reconnection with Xerxes (who hadn't asked for her company in 30 days) before presenting her request.

It turned out that when she did tell Xerxes about Haman, it was a timing that had a great impact on him.

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?

He obviously had a large ego and could not accept any slight, or perhaps any lack of applause. Also, Mordecai was a Jew, and the Jews had, on God's command, defeated the Amalekites (Haman's people.)

6. Was Xerxes a good king? Why or why not?

Answers vary. He was a party-animal, and though he sought advice, he took passed decrees without thinking things through. Historical records show that his contemporaries thought of him as a foolish king. But in this story, he was good to Esther. He was not too proud to admit he was wrong.

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.

Yes, God knows the future and had chosen His person to put into position to deal with it. When we look back at events in our lives and in the world, we can see God's

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.2 Esther, Queen of Persia, part two

hand in it. The Bible is full of stories in which you can see His working in people and events of the day.

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 by the Persians. Jeremiah told them when this would happen because of their disobedience. Isaiah told them the name of the Persian king, Cyrus, 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?

Either they hadn't been taught what the prophets had said, or they didn't believe them, or they weren't interested. They chose their own wisdom rather than seek to honour God. But this story shows that God may have been behind their decision to stay in Persia - He had plans for them there.

b) Why did God still protect the Jews?

This is an example of His grace and His commitment to his people. They were disobedient in rejecting Him, but still He chose to keep them safe. His covenant with them was based on His promise, not on their works. He made His name known throughout the Persian Empire by His action in saving His people. Through His people He gave all humanity the chance to belong to Him by sending Messiah to the world.

c) There are many prophecies in the Bible about the "end times". Do we pay attention to those prophecies? Why or why not?

We are like the Jews in that many of us are not taught the prophecies, or don't believe them, or are indifferent to them. We also want to live our lives by our own wisdom.

Prophecy often isn't taught because some of it is difficult to understand, and because there are strong differences in opinion about its interpretation. Nevertheless, it is a part of Scripture, and so should not be ignored; otherwise we are in a sense saying that God was mistaken to have given it to us. So we need to study it - with caution and discernment.

9. This story does not mention God, so why did the early church include it in the Bible?

You may wish to read through the whole book of Esther to show how God's fingerprints are all over it. There was no "luck" involved in Mordecai having become an official, or in his overhearing the assassination plot against Xerxes, or in Esther becoming queen. God was behind the divorce of Vashti, Esther being inducted into



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the harem, and the favour Esther found with the head of the harem and with the king. He was behind the favour that the Jews had with the Persians, for they were confused when Xerxes' ordered their annihilation and pleased when it was stopped. God prevented Mordecai from being killed by Haman. God arranged for Xerxes to have a sleepless night and for the book of records to be read, and for the story of Mordecai to be told.

God's will was accomplished using man's free will as his agents.

God allowed the Jews to undergo the fear of Xerxes' death sentence against them, then experience God's deliverance. He allowed Mordecai and Esther to go through this test and see the end as well. He let them all learn hope, and he teaches us hope through this story.

## The Woman at the Well

John 4:1-42

### Background:

#### Samaria and the Samaritans

In the days of King Rehoboam, Solomon's son, Israel split apart in a civil war. The ten northern tribes broke away and set up their own king (Jeroboam I) and their own capital city (Shechem, then Samaria) but kept the name Israel for their kingdom.

The northern kingdom also broke away from faithful worship of the God of Israel. Jeroboam told his people to no longer go to the Temple that Solomon had built in Jerusalem; he set up two golden calves for them to worship instead, appointed his own priests, and inaugurated his own festivals.

The two remaining southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, kept the Davidic king (Rehoboam), the original capital city (Jerusalem), and took the name Judah. Those from the northern tribes who wanted to remain faithful to the God of Israel moved south and joined in with the Judahites.

Sometimes there were good relationships between the two kingdoms, and sometimes enmity. The apostate northern kingdom sometimes tried to dominate Judah, and sometimes sided with Judah's enemies.

Around 722 BC, the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. As was their custom, they sent the northern people of Israel into exile, scattering them throughout the Assyrian empire. These Israelites became the "10 lost tribes".

The Assyrians then took the land of the northern kingdom, which they called Samaria, and repopulated it with Gentiles from the many nations they had conquered. Some of these resettled people were from as far away as Babylon and Elam. (After this the Persian tribes moved into Elam and renamed it Persia.)

The resettled Gentiles, who worshipped many gods, intermarried with the remaining northern Israelites. The result was a mixed-race people, known as the Samaritans.

To intermarry with Gentiles and adopt their customs was strictly forbidden by God. The Samaritans also mixed the pagan worship of the Gentiles into their already apostate worship of God. They believed that only the books of Moses were authoritative; they rejected all other Scriptures. They rejected all Jewish traditions. And they continued to reject the temple in Jerusalem.

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.3 The woman at the Well

They built their own temple on Mount Gerizim then changed history and Scripture by claiming that Moses himself had commanded their temple on Mount Gerizim to be the place where all Israelites should worship. And on top of this, they gave safe hideouts for outlaws fleeing Judahite justice.

In the passage of time the Babylonian Empire conquered the Assyrian Empire. Although God had not allowed the Assyrians to succeed in conquering Judah, He did allow the Babylonians to do so. The Babylonians carried off the Jews of Judah to Babylon. But unlike the Assyrians, the Babylonians did not repopulate Judah with Gentiles. They left Judah in the care of the few remaining farmers and vineyard keepers. The Babylonian exile lasted 70 years.

After the 70 years, the Persian Empire conquered the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus the Great of Persia allowed all the people groups that Babylon had conquered to return to their lands and rebuild (though they would still serve Persia). The Jews were now free to return to Judah, though only 50,000 were willing to do so.

When the Jews returned to Judah, the Samaritans were not pleased. They were immediately hostile and threatening to them. They carried false reports about the returning Jews to the Persian rulers, saying that they were trying to rebel against Persia and managed to shut down the rebuilding of Jerusalem for many years. The Samaritans tried everything they could to stop Judah from rising again as a nation. The Samaritans continued to show hostility towards the Jews of Judah even into Jesus' day.

So there is little wonder that the Jews of Judah disliked the Samaritans intensely, retained bitterness towards them, and would have no dealings with them. The pious Jews would try to avoid travel through Samaria. And when they did travel through there, they would literally knock the dust off of their feet before returning to the land of Judah.

#### 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?

This gets students thinking about what makes an outsider, and how they might be treated. Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

### What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

### Passage Questions

#### True or False

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

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

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| ___f___ 1. a well             | a. moving water                                |
| ___c___ 2. to draw            | b. a father, grandfather, great grandmother... |
| ___a___ 3. flowing            | c. to get water from a place                   |
| ___b___ 4. ancestor           | d. believed                                    |
| ___d___ 5. put their faith in | e. water coming up from the ground             |
| ___e___ 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 \_\_\_ancestor\_\_\_.
2. The woman had come to the well \_\_\_to draw\_\_\_ the water.
3. The people of Sychar \_\_\_put their faith in\_\_\_ Jesus because they believed he was the Messiah.
4. Jesus talked about a \_\_\_fountain\_\_\_ of \_\_\_flowing\_\_\_ water.
5. When Jesus first came to Sychar, He sat near the \_\_\_well\_\_\_.

## Discussion

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

- *Easier*

1. **Where was Jesus in this story?**  
He was at Jacob's well near Sychar, Samaria.
2. **What did Jesus and the woman talk about?**  
The woman talked about Jews and Samaritans. Jesus talked about water, God's worship and eternal life.
3. **What was special about the water Jesus talked about?**  
It was living water. You would never thirst again if you drank it.
4. **Who did Jesus say He was? Why is that important?**  
Jesus said He was the Messiah. This is important because both the Jews and Samaritans were waiting for the Messiah.
5. **What did the woman do after talking to Jesus?**  
She ran to the village to tell the villagers what Jesus had said.
6. **What did Jesus say about how God wanted people to worship Him?**  
Jesus said those who worship God must be led by the Spirit to worship Him according to the truth.
7. **Why did the woman at the well believe Jesus was the Messiah?**  
He told her about her life, things no one but God could have known. He also told her these things with compassion and love - and an offer of salvation. So she believed not only that He did exist, but also she trusted in His character.
8. **Why did the Samaritans in her city ask Jesus to stay with them?**  
They must have realized that He was the Messiah and the truth, the way, and the life. This shows that they valued God when they realized who He was.
9. **Jews and Samaritans did not like each other. Why, then, did the disciples stay with Jesus in the Samaritan town of Sychar?**  
They trusted Jesus even in this situation that went against the traditions of their people and the teachings of their rabbis. And they were probably realizing that Jesus was calling the Gentiles and were curious about this. They may have even learned compassion for them from Jesus.

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.3 The woman at the Well

- *Intermediate*

1. What country was Jesus travelling through on his way home?  
He was travelling through Samaria.
2. What do you think was unusual about meeting the woman at the well? Why was the woman surprised that Jesus was there?  
People don't usually draw water at noon (They need water for morning activities like cooking/washing etc.). Jews didn't usually travel through Samaria.
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?  
She is aware of the differences between the Jews and Samaritans, showing she is intelligent and curious. These are the first things they would talk about and it engages the listeners who might have the same questions.
4. What was special about the water Jesus talked about?  
It was living water: it was spiritual.
5. What made the woman think that Jesus could be the Messiah?  
He knew about her husbands, so He was clearly a prophet. He told her he was the Messiah.
6. What did Jesus mean when he said God was seeking worshipers led by the Spirit to worship according to truth?  
Answers will vary. Some points worth bringing up: Jesus is the Truth and the way to come to God. Because of his sacrifice and resurrection, believers have His Holy Spirit within (John 14: 6, 7, 26). The Holy Spirit guides us, teaches us, and helps us pray and worship (Rom 8:26).
7. What reasons did the villagers give for why they came to have faith in Jesus?  
They believed because of what Jesus had said about the woman and more believed because of what Jesus said.
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?  
She was recognizing that Jesus was at least a prophet of God, and she was interested in the truth and willing to accept it. She was spiritually open and hungry for what she was starting to see about God.
  - 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

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.3 The woman at the Well

not offend her?

Jesus had not treated her offensively. She trusted Jesus to tell the truth, and she trusted that He was interested in her and cared for her. This was more important to her than religious teachings - or the approval of her culture.

- *Challenging*

1. Which country was Jesus travelling through on his way home? Why didn't Jesus avoid going there?

He was travelling through Samaria. He had a mission to complete.

2. Why was the time of day for meeting the woman significant?

People don't usually draw water at noon (They need water for morning activities like cooking/washing etc., and it is hard physical labour to do in high heat.).

3. What issues did Jesus bring up with the woman?

The importance of the living water that he could give.

4. What made the woman think that Jesus could be the Messiah?

He knew about her husbands, so He was clearly a prophet. He told her he was the Messiah, after she already knew he was from God.

5. What influenced the villagers to come and see Jesus?

The woman's testimony about Jesus.

6. What is the significance of living water?

You don't get thirsty. It's spiritual, it's alive: it represents the Holy Spirit.

7. What did Jesus mean when he said the God was seeking worshipers led by the Spirit to worship according to truth?

Answers will vary. Some points worth bringing up: Jesus is the Truth and the way to come to God. Because of his sacrifice and resurrection, believers have His Holy Spirit within (John 14: 6, 7, 26). The Holy Spirit guides us, teaches us,(John 14) and helps us pray and worship (Rom 8:26).

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?

She was recognizing that Jesus was from God, and she was interested in the truth and willing to accept it. She was spiritually open and hungering for what she was starting to see about God. Because His teachings opposed what her culture taught,

## Chapter One: Outsiders by Nationality

### 1.3 The woman at the Well

accepting what Jesus said could have further alienated her from her culture and her people, but she chose to risk that and believe in Him.



## Ruth, the Gleaner, Part One

Ruth: 1-2

### Background:

#### Ammon and Moab

When Abraham moved from Haran to Canaan, he took his nephew Lot with him. When their herds became too large to graze together, Lot chose the valley of the Jordan River for himself, leaving the rocky, drier regions for Abraham.

Lot settled in the village of Sodom, married one of its women, and had two daughters.

When two strangers came to Sodom, Lot insisted they spend the night safe in his home. That night the men of Sodom came to Lot's house demanding their right to sexually use the two strangers. Lot offered them his two daughters instead. But the townsmen weren't interested.

The two strangers were angels. They struck the townsmen with blindness and told Lot and his family to get out of Sodom because God was going to destroy it. Lot tried to get his daughter's fiancés to flee with them, but the two young men didn't believe him.

The angels led Lot and his family safely out of Sodom. Then they told them to flee without stopping or looking back. But Lot's wife looked back at Sodom as it was being destroyed, and she turned into a pillar of salt.

Lot was then left alone with his two daughters. Those daughters decided to get their father drunk and have sex with him. One daughter had a son named Ammon (his tribe became the Ammonites) and the other daughter a son named Moab (his tribe became the Moabites). Both the Ammonites and the Moabites became pagan nations.

#### Ancient Israel

Abraham's son Isaac had a son, Jacob. God changed Jacob's name to Israel. Jacob had 12 sons; each became one of the 12 tribes of Israel. The whole family moved to Egypt when there was a famine in Canaan.

When Moses led the Israelites from Egypt back to Canaan, the king of Moab refused to allow them to travel through Moab. Moab also hired a prophet named Balaam to pronounce curses on the Israelites.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.1 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part One

Israel's relationship with Moab was a rocky one. Sometimes they got along, other times they competed for the same land and were at war. When the Assyrian Empire attacked Judah from the north, the Moabites didn't miss the opportunity to attack Judah from the south.

#### Background to the Story:

This story takes place around 1140 B.C. Israel does not yet have a king. The 12 tribes of Israel each have their own territory and are united as a confederation.

To escape a famine, an Israelite man from the tribe of Judah moves with his wife, Naomi, and their two sons to the land of Moab. There both sons marry pagan Moabite women. The man and both his sons die in Moab, leaving Naomi a destitute widow.

When Naomi decides to return to her village in Israel, she tells her two Moabite daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and remarry there. However, one daughter-in-law, Ruth, insists on staying with Naomi to help support her. When they return to Naomi's village, Ruth finds work as a gleaner in the fields of a close relative of Naomi's.

#### Before you read:

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

The purpose of this question is to get students thinking about family relationships, especially among in-laws. (Naomi and Ruth are unusually close for in-laws.) Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

#### What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

#### Passage Questions

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

\_d\_1. Israelites disliked Moab because      a. Naomi's husband.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.1 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part One

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <u>_f_</u> 2. Orpah and Ruth married   | b. that, "your God will be my God."   |
| <u>_g_</u> 3. Naomi thought that God   | c. to get food for herself and Naomi  |
| <u>_b_</u> 4. Ruth told Naomi          | d. Moabites attacked them sometimes.  |
| <u>_a_</u> 5. Boaz was a relative of   | e. would reward Ruth for her kindness |
| <u>_c_</u> 6. Ruth went into the field | f. Naomi's two sons.                  |
| <u>_e_</u> 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.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.1 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part One

- 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

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers that are unbiblical.

- *Easier*

1. How many people were in Naomi's family when they went to Moab?  
They were a family of four: Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons.
2. What happened to Naomi's family in Moab?  
Her husband died. Both sons died (after they had each married).
3. Why did Naomi tell her daughters-in-law to return to their own mothers?  
She wanted them to be secure. If they stayed in Moab, they could easily find a husband to support them, but if they went back with her to Bethlehem, they would be outsiders and possibly rejected by the people. Also, Naomi had lost trust in God.
4. Why do you think Ruth stayed with Naomi?  
She wanted to look after Naomi. She loved Naomi and she honoured Naomi's God, the God of Israel, rather than the Moabite god, Chemosh.
5. Where did Naomi and Ruth move to? Why would Ruth be an outsider there?  
They went back to Naomi's hometown of Bethlehem in Judah. They had a good harvest there. Ruth would not only be a foreigner, but also from a nation that had been enemies to Israel.
6. What had God told the Israelites to do when they harvested a field? What does this tell you about God? About the Israelites?  
God told them to not harvest the entire crop from their fields, but to leave some of it behind for the poor and the foreigners to harvest. This shows that God was compassionate to the poor and to foreigners and wanted His people to be that way too. Boaz had responded to God's heart on this and obeyed Him.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.1 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part One

7. **Ruth looked for work in the harvest field. What does this tell you about her?**  
She was humble and willing to take on a job that involved hard, physical work and paid little. She wanted to support her mother-in-law.
8. **Who was Boaz?**  
He was the owner of the field (also a relative of Naomi's).
9. **How did Boaz treat Ruth?**  
He treated her well. He asked about her and spoke kindly to her. He told his men to not bother her. He told her to drink from the water jars prepared for his own workers.
10. **How would the end of the harvest be a problem for Ruth and Naomi?**  
Ruth would no longer have any work or means of supporting herself and Naomi. What grain she had been able to save and to sale might not be enough to last them until the next harvest. Ruth wouldn't see Boaz again on a daily basis.

- *Intermediate*

1. **Why did Naomi's family go to Moab?**  
There was a famine in the land, and so times were tough. Her husband thought they would be secure in Moab. He may not have sought God about the move.
2. **Compare Orpah and Ruth.**  
Both were Moabites, and both loved Ruth enough to want to go with her to Bethlehem. Naomi was able to convince Orpah to stay in Moab and be secure, but Ruth put the welfare of Naomi above her own security.
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?**  
Naomi probably thought her old name didn't fit her life. She thought that God was afflicting her because He had left her a widow with no sons to support her. She may have felt angry with God, or perhaps she may have thought God had a good reason to punish her, even though she didn't know the reason.
4. **Why did Naomi tell her daughters-in-law to stay in Moab?**  
She thought that they would be secure there, for they would have family and friends and they would have a good chance of finding another husband. The Moabites did not worship the God of Israel and they were often at war with Israel. So, Naomi may have thought that they would be unlikely to find Israelite husbands. She knew that they would all have a very hard life in Bethlehem.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.1 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part One

5. **What does the Israelite law regarding harvesting a field tell you about their God? About Boaz?**

God has compassion for the poor and the foreigner and seeks to provide for them. He wanted His people to learn this compassion. Boaz feared God enough to obey Him. Boaz also showed that he had learned to have a heart of compassion.

6. **Compare the life of Boaz and Naomi.**

Naomi and her husband and sons fled the famine in Judah to live in a godless nation, for the sake of security. Boaz had stayed in Bethlehem, toughed it out through the famine, and had become prosperous.

Naomi did try to do what was best for her daughters-in-law. Boaz also tried to help Ruth.

7. **What work did Ruth do? Why did Ruth take on this work?**

Ruth picked up the stray grain that a group of harvesters would miss gathering when harvesting a field. This may have been the only type of work that was available for a foreigner or those without land, and perhaps the only type of work that she knew how to do. She took on this work to support herself and Naomi.

8. **How did Boaz show compassion for Ruth?**

He treated her well. He asked about her and spoke kindly to her. He told his men to not bother her. He told her to drink from the water jars prepared for his own workers.

9. **What would the end of the harvest mean for Ruth and Naomi?**

There would be no more work for Ruth to do. She may not have been able to store up and sell enough grain to keep herself and Naomi until the next harvest. Ruth would not see Boaz again on a daily basis.

#### • *Challenging*

1. **How did Naomi show compassion for her daughters-in-law?**

She had a good relationship with them because neither of them wanted to leave her. She put their welfare above her own, urging them to leave her and return to their families and find new husbands.

2. **Was Orpah wrong to return to her family? Was she wise?**

No, this was a reasonable thing to do and it showed that she obeyed Naomi's request. However, she missed out on being part of God's covenanted people, the Israelites, and having a relationship with the one true God. Despite Naomi's bitterness, Ruth was able to see God's worth and said that He would be her God.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.1 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part One

**3. If you had been Ruth, would you have found it easy to move to Bethlehem?**

No, that would have been a long journey and perhaps not a safe journey for two women to make. They were returning to a land that was dependant on rainfall and therefore often in danger of famine. Naomi was poor, and Ruth would become a poor, foreign woman in a strange land. Ruth would have to work at one of the lowest and poorest of jobs, a gleaner.

**4. Was Elimelech's decision to move to Moab a wise one?**

It was wise from a worldly standpoint. But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and Elimelech did not appear to have prayed about the move beforehand. He valued security in a godless land over trust in God. Those who stayed in Bethlehem, like Boaz, not only survived the famine, but prospered.

**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?**

From her point of view, God had taken everything from her, her husband and both her sons, and left her in poverty. Most people who trust in God yet lose everything would be tempted to be angry with God, and some people who have had hard lives feel this way. Naomi may have felt God was punishing her and her family. But in the next lesson we will see that God's plan was for good - both for Naomi and Ruth, and for all human beings.

**6. What does the Israelite law regarding harvesting a field tell you about their God? About Boaz?**

God has compassion on the poor and the foreigner. He gave His people this law so that they would provide for the poor and the foreigner. Boaz feared God enough to obey Him and had this heart of compassion himself.

**7. Would Boaz be a good husband for Ruth? Why or why not?**

Yes, he was a kind man (he looked out for Ruth's welfare), and a prosperous man (he had fields that produced a large enough harvest to need several harvesters. The full story in the Bible tells us that his harvesters seemed to have a good relationship with him. He was not arrogant for he worked alongside his harvesters and slept out in the fields with them to protect his crops (that also showed that he was responsible.)

**8. Compare the life of Boaz and Naomi.**

Naomi and her husband and sons fled the famine in Judah to live in a godless nation, for the sake of security. Boaz had stayed in Bethlehem, toughed it out through the famine, and had become prosperous.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.1 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part One

Naomi did try to do what was best for her daughters-in-law. Boaz also tried to help Ruth.

#### 9. Compare the life of Boaz and Ruth.

Boaz was an older man. We don't know if he was a widower or not. He was a descendant of the tribe of Judah. He trusted God to take him through the famine, so he stayed in the land that God had given to his people.

He must have worked hard because he prospered. He had a good relationship with his workers. He was humble, he worked alongside them and ate and slept in the fields.

Ruth was a young woman, and a Moabite. The Moabites had often been at war with the Israelites. She had married an Israelite man, and apparently through that marriage came to know of the God of Israel. She was a Gentile convert to Judaism. She had a good relationship with her mother-in-law. She trusted God to take care of her and Naomi when she accompanied Naomi to Bethlehem. She was humble, she worked hard in the fields, and kept some of her lunch to take back to Naomi.

#### 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?

For Boaz, this was the time to profit from his hard labour, and a time to sleep beside his crops to protect them from theft. For Ruth and Naomi, it was the end of Ruth's work; she might not have made enough from the grain she collected to keep herself and Naomi for a full year. The Bible builds up suspense and drama in its stories and ends without that suspense being resolved. What will happen to Ruth next?



## Ruth, the Gleaner, Part Two

Ruth: 3-4

### Background:

#### Moab

When Abraham moved from Haran to Canaan, he took his nephew Lot with him. When their herds became too large to graze together, Lot and Abraham separated.

Lot settled in the village of Sodom, married one of its women, and had two daughters. But God was displeased with the lewd behavior of the people of Sodom and sent two angels to Lot to take him and his family out of Sodom before God destroyed it.

Lot tried to get his daughter's fiancés to come with them, but they refused to come. The angels had to drag Lot and his family out of Sodom. When Lot's wife turned back to look at Sodom, she was turned into a pillar of salt.

Living alone in the hills, Lot's two daughters got their father drunk and had sex with him. One daughter had a son named Ammon (his tribe became the Ammonites) and the other daughter a son named Moab which means, "from my father" (his tribe became the Moabites).

The Moabites were often enemies of Israel. When Moses led the Israelites from Egypt back to Canaan, the king of Moab refused to allow them passage through Moab (Judges 11). Moab also hired Balaam to pronounce curses on the Israelites. But a talking donkey intervened. When the Assyrians attacked Judah from the north, the Moabites didn't miss the opportunity to attack Judah from the south.

Moab was conquered by the Assyrians, then by the Arabs, and finished off by the Babylonians.

### Marriage Customs:

Apparently, marriage had to be announced to the elders and the villagers at the city gates, probably for their approval.

The wedding itself was in three stages:

1. Fathers arranged the match. If the bride said "yes", the couple were engaged; they would sign a legal marriage contract. Though they were now legally married, the groom would return to his father's house, the bride would remain in her father's house, and they would not have sexual relations.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.2 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part Two

2. The father of the bride would set out the bride price the groom had to pay; he could pay this in money or in service to the bride's father. The father of the bride would share the bride money with the bride. The groom would give gifts to the bride and the parents of the bride.

The groom would then return to his father's house and build a home for his bride. This home was usually an addition to his father's house.

The father of the groom determined when the wedding would be and paid for it. The wait time between the engagement and the wedding was usually a year.

The bride did not know exactly when the groom would come for her.

3. When the groom came for his bride, he would announce himself with a shout. He would then take her back to his father's house for the wedding. Following the wedding there would be a feast that could last 7 days.

#### Before you read:

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

The purpose of this question is to focus on the difficulties of widows and help their understanding of Naomi & Ruth's plight. Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

#### What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

#### Passage Questions

Change the False sentences to True:

1. A redeemer is someone who buys and sells land.  
A redeemer is someone who rescues someone.
2. A kinsman-redeemer had to marry a widow from a different family.  
A kinsman-redeemer could marry a widow from his family.
3. Ruth was a proud woman.  
Ruth was a humble woman.
4. Naomi thought Ruth should never marry again.

Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

2.2 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part Two

Naomi thought Ruth should have a husband.

5. Boaz didn't want to marry Ruth.  
Boaz wanted to marry Ruth.
6. David was Boaz and Ruth's son.  
David was Boaz and Ruth's great-grandson/ Obed 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

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.2 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part Two

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

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

- *Easier*

1. What was a kinsman? A redeemer? A kinsman redeemer?  
A kinsman is a male relative. A redeemer is someone who saves another. A kinsman redeemer is a male relative who saves a widow from poverty.
2. What should a kinsman redeemer do?  
He should take over the property of any man of his clan who died, and he should take care of the man's widow by marrying her and giving her children to inherit her late husband's property. (The children would not only be considered the children of the kinsman redeemer, but also as the legal children of the widow's late father. Both the kinsman redeemer's ancestors - and the widow's late husband's ancestors would be considered to be the children's ancestors.)
3. What did Naomi want Ruth to do? Why would she want her to do this at night?  
She wanted Ruth to ask Boaz to take on the role of kinsman-redeemer. She told Ruth to go to him at night when he was sleeping and lie at his feet. This gave Ruth an opportunity to ask Boaz the question and for him to respond, without anyone seeing them.
4. Why was Boaz surprised by Ruth's request for him to marry her?  
He was old, and Ruth was young. She could have chosen a young man to marry.
5. Why did Boaz want Ruth to leave before morning?  
Boaz didn't want anyone to know she had been there. He probably wanted to make the engagement official before everyone knew their plans. He would have kept Ruth beside him until the night was over to protect her (and maybe also for a

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.2 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part Two

chance to be so close to the woman he loved.) He then gave her lots of the harvested barley to take home for herself and Naomi. (This could be seen as a token of his intended bride-price that was customary to give the bride's family.) He then went to the city gates and legally arranged to marry her - but first he asked a younger, closer relative if he wanted to marry Ruth. (The closer relative said no.)

6. **Why did Boaz go to the town square?**

He had to ask a closer relative if he wanted to redeem the land and Ruth. This had to be done in front of the town's elders, in public.

7. **Why did the closer relative not want to marry Ruth?**

He said this would interfere with his own inheritance - perhaps meaning that he didn't want to have a second wife and future children. Future children would be regarded as belonging to Ruth's late husband; they would inherit that late husband's estate (according to the legal custom of the time). So, that land would belong to them, and not to him. Also, maybe he didn't value Ruth.

8. **How did the people of Bethlehem feel about the marriage of Ruth and Boaz? How do you know this?**

Yes, they were happy, because they all blessed Boaz and Ruth when they had a son.

9. **Why might God have chosen Ruth to be an ancestor of Jesus?**

The Jews were God's chosen people, that is, they were chosen to serve and represent Him. His long-range plan was to use the Jews to save the Gentiles (non-Jews) as well and have them serve Him too. (And He did so through Jesus.)

Boaz's role as kinsman-redeemer to the Gentile Ruth mirrored Jesus' role as kinsman-redeemer to all those, Jew and Gentile, who were foreigners to God's kingdom.

- *Intermediate*

1. **What was a kinsman-redeemer? Why would Israelites have this as part of their customs?**

It was important to keep the land in the family, so if someone needed to sell the land, the buyer had to be a relative. Also, widows needed protection and a way to live. If the kinsman-redeemer married the widow, then she had family, and she could have children.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.2 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part Two

2. **Why was Boaz surprised by Ruth's request?**

He thought that she would want a younger man to marry her.

3. **Why did Boaz ask Ruth to leave before anyone saw her?**

He was protecting her reputation. He was also keeping his desire to marry her a secret until after he approached the younger man who was a closer relative and might want to marry her. This man did not see marriage to Ruth as desirable, if he had known that Boaz valued Ruth as a wife, he might have then reconsidered Ruth's value.

4. **Why did Boaz go to the town square?**

This is where important business transactions were made, the town council met, court was held, and public announcements were made.

5. **Why didn't the closer kinsman in the tribe want to redeem Ruth?**

He was worried that it would cause him trouble with the property he had. He must have been a widower and he didn't want to have more children. If he had more children, he would have to split the inheritance among both the children of his first marriage and those of his second marriage. And his children by Ruth would inherit Ruth's late husband's estate, so that land would be theirs, and not his.

6. **Were the people in Bethlehem happy about the marriage? How do you know this?**

Yes, they were happy, because they all blessed Boaz and Ruth when they had a son.

7. **Had Naomi expected Ruth to be so accepted by the people of Bethlehem? Why or why not?**

No, she probably thought they would dislike a Moabite. That is why she had told Ruth to go back to her own mother and stay in Moab.

8. **Why might God have chosen Ruth to be the ancestor of Jesus?**

Jews were God's chosen people, that is, they were chosen to serve and represent Him. His long-range plan was to use the Jews to save the Gentiles as well and have them serve Him too. (And He did so through Jesus.) Boaz's role as kinsman-redeemer to the foreigner Ruth mirrored Jesus' role as kinsman-redeemer to all those, Jew and Gentile, who were foreigners to God's kingdom

9. **How did God change Naomi's bitter life?**

Naomi had lost her husband and two sons. She also lost one daughter-in-law, but she kept Ruth, who loved her and God. God gave her a new son (Boaz) and a grandson. She also went from a very poor life to a life in a rich household.

- *Challenging*

1. **What would life have been like for Ruth if Boaz had not married her?**  
She would not have had any other offer from another relative to marry her, for the man more closely related to her than Boaz, refused to do so. She may have been mistreated either as a foreigner, or as a widow. Boaz had told her not to glean in any other field, and Naomi had told her to stay close to the women harvesters for fear of mistreatment by male harvesters.
2. **Why did Ruth ask Boaz at night, rather than during the day?**  
This gave her privacy in her request to him, for during the day he would be surrounded by harvesters. By going to him when everyone was sleeping, there was no one to interrupt her request, or to rouse disapproval from the harvesters. If Boaz had refused her, then she would save face.
3. **Do you think that Boaz loved Ruth? Why do you say that?**  
Yes. He asked his harvesters about her, he arranged for her protection, he gave her food, he praised her. And when she asked him to marry her, he praised her for choosing him over younger men. The same day that she asked him (the Jewish day begins at sunset the night before) he went to the city gate and arranged his marriage to her.
4. **Why didn't Boaz recognize Ruth when he woke up?**  
It was night, so he couldn't see her well. And he must not have been expecting her to come to him and ask him this request, especially not at night for that could compromise her reputation.
5. **Why would the villagers of Bethlehem cheer Ruth and Boaz's marriage? Do you think Naomi was surprised by this? Why had she so misjudged her people when she asked Ruth to stay in Moab?**  
They must have liked both Boaz and Ruth. They were also happy for Naomi after all her troubles. Naomi was probably pleasantly surprised because she knew the bad feeling for Moab. Perhaps she didn't realize how Ruth had gained the people's respect by her devotion to one of their own.
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?**  
Jesus called himself 'brother', because he was fully human and therefore a kinsman to humanity. He is also our Redeemer, sacrificing Himself to save all who accept Him as Son of God.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.2 Ruth, the Gleaner, Part Two

7. Romans 8:28 says, "We know that God is always at work for the good of everyone who loves him. They are the ones God has chosen for his purpose." 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?

The deaths of Naomi's husband and sons were turned to good when God took Ruth, a Gentile woman, and made her the ancestor of King David. The Bible is full of similar examples: Joseph sold into Egypt as a slave; Hadassah (Esther) taken to the Persian king's harem; Jesus dying on the cross.

8. Why might God have chosen Ruth to be an ancestor of Jesus?

The Jews were God's chosen people, that is, they were chosen to serve and represent Him. His long-range plan was to use the Jews to save the Gentiles as well and have them serve Him too. (And He did so through Jesus.)

Boaz's role as kinsman-redeemer to the foreigner Ruth mirrored Jesus' role as kinsman-redeemer to all those, Jew and Gentile, who were foreigners to God's kingdom. (Galatians 3::26-28 says that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, but both are one in Christ Jesus. 2 Cor 5:16-17 says that anyone in Christ is a new creation; The old has gone, the new has come!)



Background: The Temple

The Tent of Meeting /The Tabernacle:

After God gave Moses the 10 Commandments, He also instructed Moses to build a sanctuary where His presence would dwell and gave him detailed instructions for its design. This sanctuary is sometimes called the tabernacle (an English derivative of the Hebrew word for "dwelling place"); other times it is called the tent of meeting. The tabernacle was a large, ornate tent. It had two chambers, the outer chamber was the *Holy Place*, and the inner chamber, the *Holy of Holies*.

The Ark of the Covenant was placed in the *Holy of Holies*. A thick curtain called *the Veil* hung between the two chambers. Around the tabernacle was an outer courtyard fenced with hanging curtains.

Exodus 40 says that when this structure was completed, "the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40.34).

The tabernacle and its courtyard walls were all portable. Exodus 40:36-38 says, "Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. For throughout all their journey, the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel."

However, before this elaborate tabernacle was built, Moses used an ordinary tent as a place to meet with God. Exodus 33:7 refers back to this original tent belonging to Moses. In the New King James Version, it says, "Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp and called it the tabernacle of meeting." In the New International Version, it says, "Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting."

The First Temple (Solomon's Temple):

King David chose Mount Moriah in Jerusalem for the temple. He designed the temple based on the tabernacle and its courtyard. It was a magnificent building with cedar from Lebanon and rocks hewn in quarries near Jerusalem. Solomon built it in seven years. When it was finished, and Solomon had dedicated it, "the glory of the Lord filled the house" (2 Chronicles 7:1b).

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.3 Peter, John, and the Beggar

When the Babylonians (Nebuchadnezzar) conquered Jerusalem, they looted, then destroyed the temple. Rabbinical tradition says that as the Babylonians entered Jerusalem, the priests hid the Ark in one of the chambers beneath the Temple and sealed the chamber. Another tradition says that Jeremiah hid it in a cave in Mt. Nebo, the mountain where Moses was buried. But the Ark was never seen again.

#### Zerubbabel's Temple:

The Persians (Cyrus the Great) conquered Babylonia and set the exiled Jews free. Zerubbabel (the appointed governor of Judah) and Joshua (the high priest) led the rebuilding of the temple, with encouragement from the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. But they had little money. Ezra records the older men (who remembered Solomon's Temple) wept with disappointment. But God tells the people, "My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear! ...The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former, and in this place I will give peace" (Haggai 2:5b, 9).

#### The Second Temple:

After the Persians, the Greeks (Alexander the Great), then the Romans (Pompey) conquered and ruled the region. Herod the Great did a massive remodel of the temple. He filled up the slopes of the Temple Mount and held this in place with 30-meter high retaining wall. He embellished the temple itself, making it into a magnificent building. The early church met in its huge outer courtyard. The Beautiful gate on the south wall of this courtyard was the main public entrance to the temple area. Jesus taught in the courtyards of this temple; and so God's presence did come to this temple, but most of His people didn't notice.

Following the Jewish rebellion of 70 AD, Rome tore down the Second Temple, stone by stone. A small part of the western outer courtyard wall survived. This wall is known as the *Western Wall* (aka *the Kotel* (Hebrew for "the Wall"), and the *Wailing Wall*.) In 135 AD, Rome had renamed Judea as Palestine.

The Byzantines, then Sasanians, then Arab Caliphates ruled the region. The Arabs built the Dome of the Rock (the Mosque of Omar) on the Temple Mount. They built it over top of the rock where the ark of the covenant had stood in the Holy of Holies of the Second Temple. They also built the Al-Aqsa mosque on the Temple Mount.

The Ottoman Empire, then Britain, ruled over what was now called Palestine. In 1948, Israel was reborn, and in the Six Day War the Israelis captured the city of Jerusalem. But Israel returned the Temple Mount to Muslim control.

### The Third Temple:

The Temple Institute of Israel has made the plans for the Israel's next Temple, all its objects, the priest's clothes, trained the priests to offer sacrifices, etc. to immediately build on the Temple Mount when able.

In Rev. 11 God tells John to measure the Temple but not its outer courtyard which is given to the Gentiles. The two witnesses will prophesy there. 2 Thess. 2 says the Antichrist will enter the Temple and there declare himself to be God.

### Early Church at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple

The Bible says that in this story, "Peter and John were going up to the Temple at the time of prayer - at three in the afternoon". In Acts 22, Paul speaks of being in the Temple praying. Acts 2:46 says that "Every day they (the first church) continued to meet together in the Temple courts." The apostles and the early church continued to worship and pray in the Temple courts. However, since Jesus had completed all sacrifices, they would not have participated in the sacrifices offered in the Temple.

A lame beggar would be placed by a Temple door so that people on the way in could practice charity. It is believed the Beautiful Gate was the Nicanor Gate, also known as the Corinthian Gate. It had beautiful engraved arches on the ceiling of its entrance way, and its gates were made of Corinthian bronze - an alloy of copper, gold, and silver.

Acts 1:15 tells us that there were 120 believers in the church praying prior to the receiving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Acts 2:41 tells us that after Peter's preaching on Pentecost about 3000 people were added to their number. Acts 4:4 tells us that after Peter's teaching following the healing of the lame beggar, the number of believers grew to about 5000 people.

### 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 purpose of these questions is to help students empathize with the beggar and appreciate what Jesus did for him. Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

### What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

### Passage Questions

#### True or False

1. Peter was a rich man. F
2. After the beggar was healed, he ran off to tell his friends. F
3. Peter was able to heal the beggar because he was very religious. F
4. Peter accused the crowd of betraying Jesus. T
5. The prophets wrote that the Messiah would suffer. T
6. God promised Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed by someone from his family. T
7. Many believed in Jesus because of Peter's message. T

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

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

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. The population of Jerusalem quadrupled during a festival.
2. The beggar could not walk. He was lame.
3. The man begged for money at the gate of the temple.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.3 Peter, John, and the Beggar

4. Peter said he could not heal the beggar because he was \_\_\_\_\_religious\_\_\_\_\_ .
5. The crowd \_\_\_\_\_stared\_\_\_\_\_ at the beggar when he was walking and jumping.
6. The people of Jerusalem \_\_\_\_\_rejected\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus as their Messiah.
7. The people \_\_\_\_\_betrayed\_\_\_\_\_ Jesus when he was being \_\_\_\_\_tried\_\_\_\_\_ by Pilate.

### Discussion

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

- *Easier*

1. Why did the beggar sit at the gate of the temple and not inside the courtyard?  
What was his life like?  
He was poor and needed money. He was not allowed to enter the temple because he couldn't walk. He was dependent on friends to carry him there. He was a regular because people knew him.
2. Why were the people so surprised to see the beggar in the temple?  
They knew he had been lame because they passed him every day and he was not allowed inside the temple. Now they saw him walking!
3. What did Peter do when he saw the crowds?  
He asked why the crowd was staring at him and explained what had happened.
4. Did Peter claim to do the healing because he was a religious man?  
No, he explained how the man was healed.
5. Who did Peter say healed the beggar?  
Jesus.
6. What did Peter tell the people
  - a) about why they had betrayed Jesus?  
Peter told them that they didn't know what they were doing, and that the prophets had said these things would happen to the Messiah.
  - b) about how the beggar was healed?  
The beggar had been healed because he put his faith in the name of Jesus.
  - c) about who Jesus was?  
Peter said that Jesus was the Messiah, the one all the prophets had spoken about long ago.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.3 Peter, John, and the Beggar

d) about what they should do?

Peter told them that they should turn to God and give up their sins.

- *Intermediate*

1. Who are the three main characters of this story?

They are Peter, John, and the beggar.

2. Compare the beggar's life with that of the temple worshippers.

He was not allowed to enter the temple because he couldn't walk. He was dependent on friends to carry him there. He was poor. They could walk, worship, and frequently had enough money to give the beggar since they recognized him later.

3. What happened to the beggar? Why was this amazing?

(students retell the story) The beggar had been lame from the time he was in the womb.

4. Did Peter claim to do the healing because he was a religious man? Why was saying this important?

No, because then people would think it was because Peter was in some way special. The focus would be on him, not Christ. It was also important for the people to realize that Peter could heal in Jesus' name because Jesus had resurrected - proof that Jesus is the Messiah.

5. Why did Peter accuse the temple worshippers of betraying Jesus?

Because they had shouted to Pilate that they preferred have a murderer set free than the innocent 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?

Peter told them that they and their leaders didn't know what they were doing, and that the prophets had said these things would happen to the Messiah. Peter told them to therefore turn to God and give up their sins. He told them that God would wipe out their sins, give them fresh strength and would send Jesus.

7. Why was it important that the people understand what the prophets said about Jesus?

The people believed the Scriptures and the truthfulness of the prophets. Seeing the connection between the prophecies and their fulfillment in Christ would help them believe that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.3 Peter, John, and the Beggar

8. What did Peter say was the purpose for God sending Jesus to the people?  
His purpose was so that God could bless them and make each one turn away from their sins.
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?  
Jesus is the descendent of Abraham.
  - b. What does this mean for us?  
It means all cultures of the earth receive God's blessing if they receive Jesus. We don't have to be Abraham's descendants.
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?  
Perhaps Jesus wanted to give this opportunity to Peter and John. This would be a public demonstration that Peter and John were able to perform miracles in Jesus' name - and this because Jesus had resurrected and still had power to heal. This proved that Jesus was the Messiah, and it proved that his disciples had the authority to start his church.

- *Challenging*

1. Who are the people mentioned in this story?  
They are Peter, John and the beggar, the worshippers, Jesus, Pilate and God.
2. Compare the beggar's life with that of the temple worshippers.  
He was not allowed to enter the temple because he couldn't walk. He was dependent on friends to carry him there. He was poor. They could walk, worship, and frequently had enough money to give the beggar since they recognized him later.
3. What happened that day at the temple?  
(students retell the story)
4. Did Peter claim to do the healing because he was a religious man? Why was saying this important?  
No, because then people would think it was because Peter was in some way special. The focus would be on him, not Christ.

## Chapter Two: Outsiders by Poverty

### 2.3 Peter, John, and the Beggar

**5. Why did Peter accuse the temple worshippers of betraying Jesus?**

Because they had shouted to Pilate that they preferred have a murderer set free than the innocent Jesus.

**6. Peter then 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?**

The people had been deeply convicted of what they had done. For the first time they realized who Jesus was and that they had killed him. They were probably filled with fear and sorrow - and they probably thought that God would now reject them and their people. But Peter now showed them that God was willing to forgive them, that He already knew that this would happen, and that it was His will to reinstate them with Himself.

Peter learned this from Jesus. The night that Jesus was taken prisoner, Peter had denied knowing Jesus three times. Peter had felt that same guilt and shame of having betrayed Him, and had gone back to fishing, figuring that he was now rejected by Jesus. But when Jesus was resurrected, he came to Peter and made him breakfast. Then Jesus publicly reinstated Peter and gave Peter a command to serve Him.

**7. Why was it important that the people understand what the prophets said about Jesus?**

The people believed the Scriptures and the truthfulness of the prophets. The Jews saw Moses as the channel between themselves and God. Seeing the connection between the prophecies of Moses and of the prophets - and their fulfillment in Christ - would help them believe that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Moses told them that if they did not listen to Jesus they would be cut off from their people.

**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. His purpose was so that God could bless them and make each one turn away from their sins and bless them. God wanted those people to serve Him and spread the word about Jesus, so "all the peoples of the earth" would be blessed by Jesus.**



## Samuel, the Young Boy, Part One

1 Samuel 1

### Background:

#### The last of the Israelite judges

It was Joshua who led the Israelite conquest of Canaan. Joshua's final words to the Israelites included a warning that the nations surrounding them would be a trap that would cause them to "disappear from this good land the Lord your God gave you" (Joshua 23:13). He therefore said that they were to never make alliances with the nations around them, to never intermarry with them, and to never establish friendly relations with them; to forsake these people's gods and choose to serve only the Lord.

But the generation after Joshua soon fell into disobedience, and brought on themselves famine in their land, and military defeat at the hand of their neighbours. In the times of this story, Israel was facing its arch nemesis, the Philistines. Unlike the Canaanites, the Philistines were not native to the region. They had travelled by sea from Cyprus and colonized the coast of Canaan. As they grew in numbers, they needed to expand their territory, and they moved inwards into the land of the Israelites.

Whenever the Israelites were suffering defeat at the hands of their enemies, they would then remember God and cry out to Him. In His grace, he would raise up a deliverer who would rescue the Israelites from the oppression of their enemies. These deliverers were called judges. Deliverance usually lasted the length of the judge's life.

Eli was both an Israelite priest and a judge in the village of Shiloh, in the Israelite land of Ephraim. Samuel was a young Israelite boy, promised to God's service by his mother, before he was even conceived. When Samuel was weaned, his mother brought him to live in Eli's house and be raised up to serve God.

Samuel became a judge, priest and a prophet. But in his days the Israelites, in their fear of the Philistines, no longer trusted in God's provision of judges, priests, and prophets. They demanded a king - like all the surrounding nations had - to lead their armies in victory over their enemies. So, Samuel found himself in the last generation of judges. It was he who would anoint the first two kings of Israel: Saul and David.

This is the story of Samuel's boyhood.

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.1 Samuel the Young Boy, Part One

Before you read:

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

The purpose of these questions is to give students some empathy for Hannah's plight and to understand the importance of vows. Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

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. 5
- b) Elkanah took Hannah, Penninah and her children to Shiloh. 2
- c) Eli the priest thought Hannah was drunk. 6
- 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. 8
- f) Penninah made Hannah feel miserable for not having children in Shiloh. 3
- g) Hannah was so upset that she cried and could not eat. 4
- h) God answered Hannah by giving her and Elkanah a son, called Samuel. 7

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

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. <u>c</u> tent           | a. to stop drinking alcohol                 |
| 2. <u>e</u> sacrifices     | b. feeding a baby by his mother's milk      |
| 3. <u>a</u> sober up       | c. a moveable house made of cloth and poles |
| 4. <u>d</u> broken-hearted | d. extremely sad; very, very unhappy        |
| 5. <u>b</u> nursing        | e. animals killed for religious reasons     |

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.1 Samuel the Young Boy, Part One

- |                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| 6. <u>h</u> miserable  | f. drinking too much alcohol |
| 7. <u>g</u> ministered | g. served                    |
| 8. <u>f</u> drunk      | h. unhappy                   |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. Elkanah offered sacrifices in Shiloh.
2. Eli served in the Tabernacle, which was a tent where God was present.
3. Hannah was broken-hearted because she was childless, and Peninah made her feel even more miserable. (2 answers are interchangeable)
4. Eli told Hannah to sober up, because he thought she was drunk.
5. Hannah did not go to Shiloh until she had finished nursing Samuel.

### Discussion

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

- *Easier*

1. Who was Hannah? Why was she unhappy?  
She was one of Elkanah's wives. She was unable to have children.
2. Why did the family go to Shiloh?  
They went to Shiloh to offer sacrifices to God. This was a time before the temple was built in Jerusalem. Shiloh was the centre of worship at that time.
3. What did Hannah ask for? Why was she so upset when she prayed?  
Hannah asked for a son. She had been barren for a long time, and Elkanah's other wife, Peninnah, who did have children, would taunt Hannah.
4. Why did Eli think Hannah was drunk? What was Hannah doing instead of drinking?  
She was moving her lips silently. Hannah was praying.
5. What caused Hannah to feel better after talking to Eli?  
Eli reassured Hannah that God would hear her prayer, so she ate something and felt better.

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.1 Samuel the Young Boy, Part One

6. The name Samuel means, "the name of God." Why did Hannah name her son this?

She named him Samuel because she had asked the Lord for him, and He had given him to her.

7. Did Hannah keep her promise to God? How?

After she had weaned Samuel she brought him to Shiloh to be the Lord's servant.

8. Has God ever answered your prayer?

Student answers will vary about their prayers and how God has answered them.

- *Intermediate*

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

Hannah was one of the wives of Elkanah, an Israelite man living in Ramah. She was childless and Peninnah taunted her about it.

2. Why do you think Hannah was so unhappy about being childless? (Her husband loved her and treated her well.)

In the culture of the time, to be childless meant you were cursed by God; there was something morally wrong with you. God never said this. He often gave babies to women who had been previously barren: example, Sarah.

3. Why did Eli think Hannah was drunk? What was Hannah actually doing?

He thought she was drunk because she was moving her lips silently in prayer.

4. What caused Hannah to feel better after talking to Eli? Why?

Eli reassured Hannah that God would hear her prayer, so she ate something and felt better. Maybe Hannah believed God had spoken through Eli.

5. The name Samuel means, "the name of God." Why did Hannah name her son this?

She named him Samuel "the name of God" because she had asked God for this son.

6. How did Hannah keep her promise to God? What did she do?

After she had weaned Samuel she brought him to Shiloh and left him there to be trained by Eli.

7. How important is prayer to this story? Has God ever answered your prayer?

It is the most important things in this story. Ask the students about their prayers and the way God has answered them.

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.1 Samuel the Young Boy, Part One

- *Challenging*

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

Hannah was one of the wives of Elkanah, an Israelite man living in Ramah. She was childless and Peninnah taunted her about it. In the culture of the time, to be childless meant you were cursed by God; there was something morally wrong with you. God never said this. He often gave babies to women who had been previously barren: example, Sarah.

2. How did Elkanah treat Hannah? How might this have contributed to the family conflict?

He favoured Hannah which surely would have made the very fertile Peninnah jealous. Peninnah could only strike back with Hannah's one 'failure'. It's never a good idea to have two wives!

3. What was significant about Hannah's prayer to God?

She prayed that if God gave her a son she would give him back to the Lord to serve Him forever. Maybe this is why God didn't bless her with children earlier because he wanted Hannah to dedicate her firstborn to Him.

4. Would you be able to pray this kind of prayer and make this kind of promise to God?

Answers vary!

5. What does Eli's comment "How long are you going to stay drunk?" reveal about himself and his interactions with others?

He was familiar with drunks and he was quick to judge.

6. The name Samuel means, "the name of God." Why did Hannah name her son Samuel? What is important about that?

She named him Samuel because she had asked God for this son, and He gave him to her. She was very aware that this son belonged to God, that it was His will that Samuel be born.

7. How does Hannah keep her promise? What strength of character does this show?

After she had weaned Samuel she brought him to Shiloh and left him there to be trained by Eli as a priest. It would be extremely difficult to leave your only child especially in the hands of Eli who was not a successful father. Samuel later had the same difficulty with his own sons. Hannah was trusting God, not Eli. (Although Samuel came from the land of Ephraim, he was a descendant of Levi. See 1 Chron. 6: 12, 13 and 1 Sam. 8:1.)

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.1 Samuel the Young Boy, Part One

8. How important is prayer to this story? Did you learn anything about the character of God?

It is the most important thing in this story. Ask the students about their prayers and the way God has answered them. Ask them what they learned about God's ways and God's character.

## Samuel the Young Boy, Part Two

1 Samuel 3:1-21

### Background:

#### The last of the Israelite judges

Joshua led the Israelite conquest of Canaan. Joshua's final words to the Israelites included a warning that the nations surrounding them would be a trap that would cause them to "disappear from this good land the Lord your God gave you" (Joshua 23:13). He therefore said that they were to never make alliances with the nations around them, to never intermarry with them, and to never establish friendly relations with them; to forsake these people's gods and choose to serve only the Lord.

But the generation after Joshua soon fell into disobedience, and brought on themselves famine in their land, and military defeat at the hand of their neighbours. In the times of this story, Israel was facing its arch nemesis, the Philistines. Unlike the Canaanites, the Philistines were not native to the region. They had travelled by sea from the Aegean Sea region and colonized the coast of Canaan. As they grew in numbers, they needed to expand their territory, and they moved inwards into the land of the Israelites.

Whenever the Israelites were suffering defeat at the hands of their enemies, they would then remember God and cry out to Him. In His grace, he would raise up a deliverer who would rescue the Israelites from the oppression of their enemies. These deliverers were called judges. Deliverance usually lasted the length of the judge's life.

Eli was both an Israelite priest and a judge in the village of Shiloh, in the Israelite land of Ephraim. Samuel was a young Israelite boy, promised to God's service by his mother, before he was even conceived. When Samuel was weaned, his mother brought him to live in Eli's house and be raised up to serve God.

As a priest, Eli would have charge of Tabernacle worship. Exodus 33:11 says that Moses' servant, Joshua, stayed in the Tabernacle, probably in the first room. Perhaps Joshua slept there at night, to serve as a guard.<sup>1</sup> He and his sons would offer sacrifices brought in by the people on the altar in front of the tent. [For an account of the 'disgusting' things done by Eli's sons, read 1Samuel 2]

In the first room of the tent was a lampstand that burned olive oil. The priest would light it every evening, clean it every morning, and keep it burning throughout the night.

## Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age

### 3.2 Samuel the Young Boy, Part Two

There was also an incense altar in the first room. The priest would burn incense on it every morning and evening. When the incense was burning, the Israelites gathered outside the tent and prayed. Samuel may have helped with all the preparations for these duties.

Samuel was a priest, a judge, and a prophet. But in his days the Israelites, in their fear of the Philistines, no longer trusted in God's provision of judges, priests, and prophets. They demanded a king -like all the surrounding nations had - to lead their armies in victory over their enemies. So, Samuel found himself in the last generation of judges. It was he who would anoint the first two kings of Israel: Saul and David.

This is the story of Samuel's boyhood.

<sup>1</sup> Batten, L. W. "The Sanctuary at Shiloh, and Samuel's Sleeping Therein." *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1900, pp. 29-33. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/3259069](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3259069).

#### Before you read:

1. How do you think God communicates with people?
2. Has anyone ever called you to wake you up when you were sleeping?  
The purpose of these questions is: 1. Emphasize that God cares about and communicates with people in many different ways. 2. Give students some understanding of how Samuel must have felt. Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

#### What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

#### Passage Questions

Change these False sentences to True:

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



Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.2 Samuel the Young Boy, Part Two

The Lord told Samuel that Eli's family had done disgusting things.

5. Samuel was happy to tell Eli what God had said.  
Samuel was afraid to tell Eli what God had said.
6. No one thought Samuel was a prophet of God. Everyone knew Samuel was a prophet.

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

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. ___d___ blind         | a. do something bad to someone who has done bad things |
| 2. ___e___ dwelling      | b. floor covering                                      |
| 3. ___b___ mat           | c. surprise  |
| 4. ___a___ punish        | d. a person who can't see                              |
| 5. ___f___ chest         | e. living  |
| 6. ___g___ get away with | f. a large box for storing things                      |
| 7. ___h___ disgusting    | g. experience bad results                              |
| 8. ___c___ shock         | h. very nasty or evil behaviour                        |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

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

### Discussion

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.2 Samuel the Young Boy, Part Two

- *Easier*

1. Who was Eli?

Eli was a priest in Shiloh. (A high priest of the line of Ithamar - Aaron's youngest son.)

2. Where did Samuel sleep?

He slept near the sacred chest or 'Ark of the Covenant'. (This contained the stone tablets of the ten commandments.) The chest was 'sacred' because God met with His people above the Ark. (You may wish to talk about the fact that God is not confined to any space, but it was a holy place He gave people who needed to come to Him.)

3. Who did Samuel think was calling him?

He thought Eli was calling him.

4. What do you think would make God angry? Why was God angry with Eli's family?  
Answers will vary. (Disrespect of God, i.e. stealing from God, ignoring the 10 commandments, etc.)

Eli's sons did not respect God and they did disgusting things. They acted as God's priests, but they were serving themselves, not God. They were "worthless men; they did not know the Lord."-1Samuel 2:12

5. Why was Samuel afraid to tell Eli?

He was afraid because it was bad news for Eli.

6. What did Eli say to this news?

"He is the LORD, and he will do what's right."

7. Are you surprised Eli said this? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. You may get some discussion about accepting God's judgement/penalty, even when it is unpleasant, or the dangers of putting family above God.

8. How did the people of Israel know that Samuel was God's prophet?

The mark of a true prophet was that everything-100%- comes true. Everything Samuel said came true.

- *Intermediate*

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

Eli was a priest in Shiloh. (A high priest of the line of Ithamar - Aaron's youngest son). He was almost blind, and his sons did not obey God.

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.2 Samuel the Young Boy, Part Two

2. Why do you think Samuel slept in the room near the sacred chest (the Ark of the Covenant)?  
Maybe there was no other place for him, but this was a very special place.
3. What did Samuel hear in the night?  
He heard a voice calling his name. Implication, God knows people's names.
4. What were some of the reasons why God was angry with Eli's family?  
The sons of Eli didn't know or obey God. They showed complete disrespect for God by forcing people to give them a part of the offering and so people didn't want to make offerings to God because of their behaviour. They also slept with the women dedicated to God's service. (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22)
5. How does Eli treat Samuel who is clearly afraid to tell him what God said?  
He threatens Samuel. (He may also be a coward, since he is harsh with the boy Samuel, but not harsh enough with his sons over their behaviour.)
6. Is Eli's response a little surprising? Why or why not?  
He has accepted it. Maybe he didn't like his son's behaviour, either. (Each generation must form their own relationship with God.)
7. How did the people of Israel know that Samuel was God's prophet?  
The mark of a true prophet was that everything-100%- comes true. Everything Samuel said came true.

- *Challenging*

1. Who was Eli and what was his family like?  
Eli was a priest in Shiloh. (A high priest of the line of Ithamar-Aaron's youngest son). He was almost blind, and his sons did not obey God.
2. Why would God call Samuel three times?  
Maybe Samuel needs to learn to recognize God's voice. He will be listening to it all his life as God's prophet.
3. What were some of the reasons why God was angry with Eli's family?  
The sons of Eli didn't know or obey God. They forced people to give them a part of the offering and so people didn't want to make offerings to God because of their behaviour. (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22) They even slept with the women dedicated to God's service, showing complete contempt for what was sacred.
4. How does Eli treat Samuel, who is clearly afraid to tell him what God said?  
Eli threatens Samuel.

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.2 Samuel the Young Boy, Part Two

5. How does Eli's threat to Samuel reveal his character?

He is not a gentle person. He may also be a coward, since he is harsh with the boy Samuel, but not harsh enough with his sons over their behaviour.

6. Is Eli's response a little surprising? Why or why not?

Eli seems almost indifferent or resigned. He already knows about his sons' behaviour and expects them to be punished.

7. How did the people of Israel know that Samuel was God's prophet?

The mark of a true prophet was that everything -100%- comes true. Everything Samuel said came true.

## Simeon and Anna, the Elderly Prophets

Luke 2:22-38

### Background:

#### Judah in the time of Roman rule

The nation of Judah had been independent from the times of Joshua to the Babylonian exile of 598 BC. Immediately after the Babylonians, they were subject to the Persian empire, then the Macedonian, then the Ptolemaic, then the Seleucid. But about 167 BC, the Maccabees led Judah to rise up in battle; they freed themselves and became an independent nation once again. This freedom lasted for 80 years. But it was ended when the Roman leader, Pompey, took control of Jerusalem in 63 BC. Pompey was succeeded by Julius Caesar in 45 BC. Following Julius Caesar's death in 43 BC, a civil war broke out in Rome over the Roman leadership. Caesar Augustus (Octavian) won over his rivals to become the sole ruler of Rome in 31 BC.

Augustus led many successful conquests for Rome and transformed it from a republic to an empire. He laid the foundations of the 200-year Pax Romana (Roman Peace) and an empire that lasted, in various forms, for nearly 1,500 years. ("Augustus". Ancient History. History.com.) Augustus officially annexed Judah as part of the Roman Empire in 6 A.D.

The Romans had declared that Julius Caesar was a god. Augustus was Julius' great-nephew and adopted son. And so Augustus declared himself the son of a god. At his death in 19 AD, his status as a god was formally proclaimed in Rome.

( <http://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/emperor-augustus>. Retrieved June 2017)

Emperor-worship did not go over well among the Jews. Further, Rome ruled their political, military, and fiscal affairs. Worse, Rome collected large amounts of taxes to fund the Roman Empire with. Israel began looking for its Messiah, and with good reason.

Two Messianic prophecies were fulfilled in these times:

- *Prophecy 1:* Jacob had prophesied that the sceptre (the rulership of Israel) would remain in the tribe of (his son) Judah until the Messiah came. Augustus established Roman governors over Judea (e.g. Pontius Pilate) and in the first century A.D., took away the Sanhedrin's judicial power over capital offences. When the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to have Jesus crucified, they told Pilate, "We cannot legally put anyone to death" (John 18 31). And so the sceptre departed from Judah when Jesus came.

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.3 Simeon and Anna, the Elderly Prophets

- *Prophecy 2:* In Daniel's prophecy of the "Seventy Weeks" Gabriel told Daniel to "know and understand" that from the time that the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Nehemiah) until the time of the Messiah would be 483 (Jewish) years. There is some difference of opinion about which command this was, but many think it likely that it must be the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 BC (recorded in Nehemiah 2:1) to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. Now 483 Jewish lunar years is about 476 solar years. So, from Artaxerxes decree that brings us to about 32 AD. That is about the time that Jesus would have entered Jerusalem on a donkey to the shouts of Hosanna! Zechariah 9:9 says, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Sout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, you king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Before you read:

1. What are the advantages of being old?

Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked. (The point of this is to get them thinking about Jesus' claims and the proof supporting them.)

What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

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.   |
| _f_2. Jesus' parents went to the Temple | b. that he would live to see the Messiah. |
| _a_3. Simeon went to the Temple         | c. would come from King David's family.   |
| _e_4. The prophet Anna lived at the     | d. Jesus would save and free his people.  |
| _b_5. God promised Simeon               | e. Temple where she prayed to God.        |
| _g_6. Joseph and Mary felt              | f. to sacrifice for their newborn son.    |
| _d_7. Anna and Simeon prophesied that   | g. surprised by Simeon's words.           |

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.3 Simeon and Anna, the Elderly Prophets

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

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.3 Simeon and Anna, the Elderly Prophets

## Discussion

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

- *Easier*

1. **What did Rome bring to the region?**

Peace. [Before Caesar, the region had been wracked with wars as various leaders fought for the leadership of Rome. Before Rome, the region was also wracked with war between the Greek generals who succeeded Alexander the Great.]

2. **What are the names of two of the Roman provinces in the region?**

Any two of: Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Perea, and Idumea (see map).

3. **Why were the Jews looking for their Messiah?**

They wanted to be delivered from Roman rule. [Also, they may have heard of the prophecies surrounding the birth of John the Baptist, and they may have heard the stories of the shepherds. Many Jews of that time were expecting the Messiah because the times for the Messiah's birth were given by Gabriel to Daniel some 500 years earlier. (Daniel 9:24-27)]

4. **What promise did God make to Simeon?**

The Spirit of God told him that he would not die until he had seen Christ the Lord. [Note: Messiah is the Hebrew word. In the Septuagint, the Jews translated Messiah as 'Christos,' Greek for "the anointed one". (The Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. It was begun in the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.), and was done under the supervision of 70 Jewish scholars. Ptolemy II Philadelphus was the Greek pharaoh of Egypt. He was a son of Ptolemy I Soter, one of the generals of Alexander the Great. When Alexander died, the rule of his kingdom was divided up among his generals, and Ptolemy I Soter was appointed to rule over Egypt.)]

5. **What did Simeon tell Mary?**

He told Mary that Jesus would divide Israel; some would rise because of Him, and others would fall. Many in Israel would reject Jesus. Jesus would be a warning sign. Mary's heart would be broken because of Jesus. Mary (and Joseph) also overheard Simeon praising God because Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus would be a light for the Gentiles, and Jesus would be the glory of Israel.

6. **What made Anna an unusual woman?**



Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.3 Simeon and Anna, the Elderly Prophets

She was a prophet, and she had devoted most of her life (probably at least 60 years) to serving God through prayer, fasting and prophesying. A woman like that would be highly respected and a most reliable witness.

7. What did Anna tell the people?

Anna told everyone that Jesus was the Messiah who would set Jerusalem free.

8. How do you think Mary and Joseph felt after hearing these prophecies?

Answers will vary. They may have felt confused or afraid when Simeon told them their boy would bring disagreement and suffering. They may also have felt comforted to get further proof that Jesus was truly the Messiah after all the difficulties surrounding his conception and birth. They probably also felt excitement that Messiah had come.

• *Intermediate*

1. Who was Caesar Augustus?

He was the first Emperor of Rome. [Before him Rome had been a republic, not an empire. When Rome was a republic, it was ruled by the Senate, elected by Roman citizens. Its provinces were ruled by various governors. But the senators and the governors would fight with each other for power.]

2. Why do you think Rome wanted to divide Judah up into provinces?

[This is answered only indirectly in the story. The Romans did this to break up the existing structure in Judah so that it would be less able to fight against Roman rule. This enabled Rome to establish greater control over the Jews who were rebellious towards Roman rule.]

3. Why did the Jews not like Roman peace?

It came at the cost of absolute control by Rome, and so the loss of their autonomy.

4. What did the Jews expect their Messiah to be like?

They saw him as someone who would liberate them from Roman rule [and restore Israel to a place of prominence, and establish God's kingdom.]

5. What did prophecy (Isaiah 61:1-4, 2Samuel 7: 12-13, Micah 5:2, and Daniel 9:24) say about the Messiah?

(You may wish to have students find those prophetic passages themselves, or you may read them.) Isaiah tells of Israel's restoration, 2 Samuel tells of God's promise to David that an Everlasting King will be born in his family, Micah said

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.3 Simeon and Anna, the Elderly Prophets

Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, and Daniel tells the time he would come (See Teacher's background).

6. **Why do you think God used Simeon and Anna as his two witnesses?**

Answers can vary here. As elderly and devout, both have had a full life of serving and experiencing God. They represent both sexes. And although they are both Jewish, Simeon prophesizes that Jesus will be a light for the Gentiles.

7. **Why was this a new era for Israel?**

Answers can vary. Up to this time, Israel had been looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. From here on the Messiah had come. [The Mosaic Law was replaced by the New Covenant. The Temple was destroyed. The ancient nation of Israel would disappear (under the Romans in 130 AD) and the "time of the Gentiles", and church age would come in. Over 1900 years would pass until Israel again existed as a nation.]

- ***Challenging***

1. **Who was Augustus Caesar and what did he accomplish?**

Caesar Augustus was the first emperor of the Roman Empire, and he brought peace to the whole Mediterranean area. [Before him Rome had been a republic, not an empire. When Rome was a republic, it was ruled by the Senate, elected by Roman citizens. Its provinces were ruled by various governors. But the senators and the governors would fight with each other for power.]

2. **Why were the Jews looking for their Messiah?**

They thought he would liberate them from Roman rule [and restore Israel to a place of prominence and establish God's kingdom.]

3. **Compare Simeon and Anna. Are they both prophets? Why or why not?**

The Bible only calls Anna a prophet, but they were both used by God as prophets in this instance. Both were elderly, wise, righteous, and devout. Simeon did not live in the Temple, but Anna did live there all the time.

4. **Was it good that Simeon told Mary that her heart would be broken? Why or why not?**

Answers can vary. Since Simeon was controlled by the Holy Spirit, this must have been from God, and must therefore have been good. You can ask the learners if they would want to know that their children would, in their service to God, bring heartbreak to their parents.

Chapter Three: Outsiders by Age  
3.3 Simeon and Anna, the Elderly Prophets

5. **What did prophecy (Isaiah 61:1-4, 2 Samuel 7: 12-13, Micah 5:2, and Daniel 9:24) say about the Messiah?**

(You may wish to have students find those prophetic passages themselves, or you may read them.) Isaiah tells of Israel's restoration, 2 Samuel tells of God's promise to David that an Everlasting King will be born in his family, Micah said Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, and Daniel tells the time he would come (See Teacher's background).

6. **Why might God have chosen Simeon and Anna for the two witnesses?**

Answers can vary here. As elderly and devout, both have had a full life of serving and experiencing God. They represent both sexes. And although they are both Jewish, Simeon prophesizes that Jesus will be a light for the Gentiles.

7. **Why is this a new era for Israel?**

Answers can vary. Up to this time, Israel had been looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. From here on the Messiah had come. [The Mosaic Law was replaced by the New Covenant. The Temple was destroyed. The ancient nation of Israel would disappear (under the Romans in 130 AD) and the "time of the Gentiles", and church age would come in. Over 1900 years would pass until Israel again existed as a nation.]

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

### Background:

#### The Time of the Judges

Joshua led the Israelite conquest of Canaan. His final words to the Israelites included a warning that the nations that surrounded them would be a trap that would cause them to "disappear from this good land the Lord your God gave you" (Joshua 23:13). Therefore, they were to never make alliances with the nations around them, to never intermarry with them, and to never establish friendly relations with them; to forsake these people's gods and choose to serve only the Lord.

But the generation after Joshua soon fell into disobedience, and brought on themselves famine in their land, and military defeat at the hand of their neighbours. The Israelites would then remember God and cry out to Him. In His grace, he would raise up a deliverer who would rescue the Israelites from the oppression of their enemies. This deliverance usually lasted the length of the deliverer's life. These deliverers were called judges.

Samson was called to be a judge but he was a picture of his people, the Israelites, at the time. Like them, he was chosen for his calling before his birth. But instead, he deserted his calling to pursue his own interests.

Though Samson was a Nazirite, forbidden to cut his hair, eat anything 'unclean' or drink anything from the grape plant or have any alcohol, he 'feasted' (drank wine) with pagans.

This story is a warning and a blessing: God gives us the strength we need (facing lions), blesses us with good things (finding honey unexpectedly), and warns us about allying ourselves with non-believing people (the Philistines) through marriage or other things.

The neighbouring nations in this story are the remaining Canaanites in the land, and the coastal Philistines (the Philistines were not native to the region, but an Aegean people who colonized the coastline.)

(reference: Bob Deffinbaugh. "Israel's Dark Ages (Judges)". Bible.org.  
<https://bible.org/seriespage/15-israel-s-dark-ages-judges>. Retrieved June 201

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

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 favourite superhero?
2. What would happen if a superhero did not care about what was right?  
The purpose of the questions is to focus students on the theme of power and responsibility in using power. Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

Passage Questions

True or False

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

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

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. <u>e</u> stir up           | a. the man the bride marries               |
| 2. <u>g</u> riddle            | b. people who don't believe in God's power |
| 3. <u>d</u> skeleton          | c. the special person you want to marry    |
| 4. <u>b</u> pagans            | d. the complete set of bones of a body     |
| 5. <u>c</u> "the one for him" | e. make something bad happen               |

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.1 Samson, the Willful, Part One

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 6. ___h___ called off | f. complaining                                |
| 7. ___a___ groom      | g. a joke that is a question you try to guess |
| 8. ___f___ whining    | h. stopped something before it happened       |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. Samson liked to tease people with a \_\_\_riddle\_\_\_.
2. Samson was sure this woman was \_\_\_the one for him\_\_\_.
3. Israelites considered the Philistines to be \_\_\_pagans\_\_\_.
4. Samson's bride was sobbing and \_\_\_whining\_\_\_ for Samson to tell her the riddle's answer.
5. The \_\_\_groom\_\_\_ traditionally throws a big party at a wedding.
6. Samson wanted to \_\_\_stir up\_\_\_ trouble for the Philistines in Ashkelon.
7. Samson didn't trust the bride, so he \_\_\_called off\_\_\_ the wedding.
8. After the lion died all that was left was a \_\_\_skeleton\_\_\_.

### Discussion

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

- *Easier*

1. What were some things God told Nazirites not to do?  
Their hair must never be cut. They must not drink any wine or beer or eat 'unclean' food forbidden by God's laws.
2. What did the angel say about how God would use Samson?  
The angel said Samson would begin to set Israel free from the Philistines.
3. What happened on the way to Timnah? What does that show about Samson's strength?  
Samson killed a lion that was threatening him. He used his bare hands to do that, so he must have been amazingly strong.
4. What did Samson find in the skeleton of the lion?  
He found a beehive with honey in its skeleton.

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.1 Samson, the Willful, Part One

5. Why do you think the Philistines told 30 young men to stay with Samson after they saw what Samson was like?

Answers will vary. When the Philistines saw how strong Samson was, they probably were afraid of him, and they didn't trust him because he was an Israelite.

6. Do you think the bet Samson made with the young men was a fair one?

Yes, because it was possible to know the answer. What is stronger than a lion or sweeter than honey in a land where both were common.

7. What did the young men threaten to do if the bride didn't get the answer from Samson?

"If you don't find out the answer, we will burn you and your family to death."

8. Did Samson live happily ever after with his bride? Why or why not?

No, because Samson called off the wedding. He didn't trust the bride after she had told the answer to the riddle. (Judges 14: 20 says the father of the bride had Samson's wife marry one of the thirty young men that had been at Samson's party. She probably wasn't happy either to marry someone who had threatened to burn her and her family.)

9. How did God use Samson for His purpose in this story?

God used Samson to stir up trouble for the Philistines when he attacked Ashkelon. His actions began a fight to free Israel from their control. And Samson was beginning to fight to free Israel from Philistine control, as the angel had prophesied.

- *Intermediate*

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

The Israelites. They didn't really know God. Their religion had become a ritual.

2. What were some things God told Nazirites not to do?

Their hair must never be cut. They must not drink any wine or beer or eat 'unclean' food forbidden by God's laws.

3. What happened on the way to Timnah?

Samson killed a lion that was threatening him.

4. Judges 14:9 says that Samson scooped up and ate some of the honey in the skeleton of the lion. What does his behaviour show about his character?

Samson was fearless in killing the lion. And he did not fear the hundreds of bees when he took the honey.

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.1 Samson, the Willful, Part One

5. Did the Philistines trust Samson? How do you know this?  
No. When the Philistines saw what Samson was like, they told thirty of their young men to stay with him at the party.
6. Was the bet Samson made with the young men fair?  
Yes, because it was possible to know the answer. What is stronger than a lion or sweeter than honey in a land where both were common.
7. What did the young men threaten to do if the bride didn't get the answer from Samson?  
"If you don't find out the answer, we will burn you and your family to death."
8. Did Samson live happily ever after with his bride? Why or why not?  
No, because Samson called off the wedding. He didn't trust the bride after she had told the answer to the riddle. (Judges 14: 20 says the father of the bride had Samson's wife marry one of the thirty young men that had been at Samson's party. She probably wasn't happy either to marry someone who had threatened to burn her and her family.)
9. How did God use Samson for His purpose in this story?  
God used Samson to stir up trouble for the Philistines when he attacked Ashkelon. His actions began a fight to free Israel from their control. This was a fulfillment of the angel's prophecy.

- *Challenging*

1. Who was disobeying God again? Why do you think they kept doing that?  
The Israelites. They didn't really know God. Their religion had become a ritual.
2. What were some things God told Nazirites not to do? Why do you think these rules were important for Samson and his parents?  
Their hair must never be cut. They must not drink any wine or beer or eat 'unclean' food forbidden by God's laws. In obeying them Samson's parents showed their faith in God. Samson was set apart for God.
3. What happened on the way to Timnah?  
Samson killed a lion and tore it to pieces but didn't tell his parents. Matthew [Henry comments: Many decline the service they might do because they *know not their own strength*. God let Samson know what he could do in the strength of the *Spirit of the Lord*, that he might never be afraid to look the greatest difficulties in the face.]



## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.1 Samson, the Willful, Part One

4. Judges 14:9 says that Samson scooped up and ate some of the honey in the skeleton of the lion. What does his behaviour show about his character?

Samson was fearless in killing the lion. And he did not fear the hundreds of bees when he took the honey. He is curious and is not average in his social behaviour. However, he returns to the scene perhaps to give thanks to God and finds a further blessing of honey.

[Matthew Henry says: As by his victory over the lion he was emboldened to encounter the Philistine-giants, if there should be occasion, notwithstanding their strength and fierceness, so by dislodging the bees he was taught not to fear the multitude of the Philistines; though they *compassed him about like bees, yet in the name of the Lord he should destroy them, Ps. 118:12*. Of the honey he here found, (1.) He ate himself, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for the dead bones of an unclean beast had not that ceremonial pollution in them that the bones of a man had. John the Baptist, that Nazarite of the New Testament, lived upon wild honey.]

5. Did the Philistines trust Samson? How do you know this?

No. When the Philistines saw what Samson was like, they told thirty of their young men to stay with him at the party.

6. Why was the bet Samson made with the young men risky?

It favoured them apparently but these people were treacherous. Samson was confident in his own strength, which came from God.

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?

"If you don't find out the answer, we will burn you and your family to death." That was a bit extreme for a bet.

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?

He went to Ashkelon, where he killed thirty men and took their clothing. Samson then gave it to the thirty young men at Timnah and stormed back home to his own family. As the angel of God had prophesied, Samson had begun the fight to free Israel from Philistine control.

[Matthew Henry says: in balancing the account, it appeared that the Philistines were the losers, for one of the lives they lost was worth all the suits of clothes they won: the body is more than raiment. *The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, both to authorize and to enable him to do this.*]

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.1 Samson, the Willful, Part One

9. Did Samson live happily ever after with his bride?

No. He went back to live with his parents.

[Matthew Henry on the purpose of Samson's marriage and behaviour: It should seem, the way in which the Philistines oppressed Israel was, not by great armies, but by the clandestine incursions of their giants and small parties of their plunderers. In the same way, therefore, Samson must deal with them; let him but by this marriage get among them, and he would be a *thorn in their sides*.

This proves a good occasion of weaning Samson from his new relations. He found how his companions had abused him and how his wife had betrayed him, and therefore *his anger was kindled*, Jdg. 13:19. Better be angry with Philistines than in love with them, because, when we join ourselves to them, we are most in danger of being ensnared by them.

10. What do you think is God's purpose in this story?

Answers will vary. We see that Samson fulfills the prophecy given by the angel - that he would free Israel from Philistine control. This shows that Samson's failures did not stop God from fulfilling His purposes for him.

## Samson, the Willful, Part Two

Judges 16:4-31

### Background:

#### The Time of the Judges

Joshua led the Israelite conquest of Canaan. His final words to the Israelites included a warning that the nations that surrounded them would be a trap that would cause them to "disappear from this good land the Lord your God gave you" (Joshua 23:13). Therefore, they were to never make alliances with the nations around them, to never intermarry with them, and to never establish friendly relations with them; to forsake these people's gods and choose to serve only the Lord.

But the generation after Joshua soon fell into disobedience, and brought on themselves famine in their land, and military defeat at the hand of their neighbours. The Israelites would then remember God and cry out to Him. In His grace, he would raise up a deliverer who would rescue the Israelites from the oppression of their enemies. This deliverance usually lasted the length of the deliverer's life. These deliverers were called judges.

Samson was the final judge described in the Bible's Book of Judges. Samson's God-given strength was tied to his Nazirite vows. Nazirites were dedicated to God, and they were forbidden to cut their hair, eat anything unclean or from the grape plant or drink any alcohol. Samson was a picture of his people, the Israelites, at the time. Like them, he was chosen for his calling before his birth. But instead, he deserted his calling to pursue his own interests.

The neighbouring nations in this story are the remaining Canaanites in the land, and the coastal Philistines (the Philistines were not native to the region, but an Aegean people who colonized the coastline.)

(reference: Bob Deffinbaugh. "Israel's Dark Ages (Judges)". Bible.org.  
<https://bible.org/seriespage/15-israel-s-dark-ages-judges>. Retrieved June 201

### 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"?

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.2 Samson, the Willful, Part Two

The purpose of these questions is to get students thinking about Samson's temptation to infatuations, which is common to human nature. Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

#### What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

#### 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. \_\_\_5\_\_\_
- j) Samson liked Delilah, so the Philistines hired her to find the secret of his strength. \_\_\_2\_\_\_
- k) Delilah cut Samson's hair, so he lost his strength, and the Philistines blinded him. \_\_\_6\_\_\_
- 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. \_\_\_7\_\_\_
- n) Delilah asked Samson, "How can I tie you up so you can't get away?" \_\_\_3\_\_\_
- o) Samson prayed to God, then he pulled the temple down, killing all the Philistines. \_\_\_8\_\_\_
- p) Samson lied to Delilah three times about how to make him weak. \_\_\_4\_\_\_

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

- |                          |                                      |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. ___e___ trick         | a. make someone pay for evil action  |
| 2. ___d___ making fun of | b. a large stone used to grind grain |
| 3. ___f___ collapsed     | c. to annoy by asking over and over  |
| 4. ___h___ bowstring     | d. humiliate                         |

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.2 Samson, the Willful, Part Two

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 5. <u>c</u> nagging and pestering | e. a way of cheating                       |
| 6. <u>b</u> millstone             | f. to fall down on the ground              |
| 7. <u>g</u> lull                  | g. to make someone feel very calm and safe |
| 8. <u>a</u> revenge               | h. string used to shoot an arrow           |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. Delilah kept nagging and pestering Samson to learn his secret.
2. They put Samson to work by pushing a heavy millstone.
3. The Philistines wanted Delilah to trick Samson.
4. Delilah lulled Samson to sleep so she could cut his hair.
5. Samson had revenge on the Philistines when the whole building collapsed, killing them all.
6. Delilah tied Samson with seven bowstrings, but he broke them.
7. The Philistines brought Samson to the party so they could make fun of him.

### Discussion

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

- *Easier*

1. What did the Philistine leaders want to know?  
They wanted to know how Samson got his strength.
2. Why did Delilah do as they asked?  
They paid her.
3. Why did Samson tell Delilah the truth?  
She nagged and pestered him.
4. What happened to Samson after Delilah cut his hair?  
He was captured by the Philistines, blinded and chained to a millstone.
5. What was Samson's final wish?  
He wanted to destroy as many Philistines as he could.

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.2 Samson, the Willful, Part Two

6. **What did Samson do that showed he didn't care about God's law?**  
He kept going after Philistine women who worshipped Dagon. This was forbidden to those who belonged to God.
7. **What did Samson do to show he still cared about God?**  
He prayed to God, asking for God to remember him and to punish the Philistines.
8. **What lesson did Samson learn about God?**  
God's rules aren't to be taken for granted. But God does not desert His people. He restores them.

- *Intermediate*

1. **Who did Samson fall in love with? Was this person a good choice? Why or why not?**  
Delilah, a Philistine woman who was a prostitute.  
No, she was one of the enemies of Israel. She didn't believe in God.
2. **What did the Philistine leaders want to know?**  
They wanted to know how Samson got his strength and what made him weak.
3. **What was Delilah's reason for obeying them?**  
They paid her.
4. **What were the Philistines hoping to do?**  
They wanted to capture Samson.
5. **Why did Samson continually trick Delilah?**  
He probably didn't trust her. Maybe he enjoyed teasing her and showing off his strength.
6. **Why did Samson finally tell her the truth? Do you think he really believed he would lose his strength?**  
She nagged and pestered him. Probably not because he had always been strong.
7. **How was Samson treated by the Philistines? What is the reason for their behaviour?**  
He was cruelly treated. He was their enemy who had destroyed their crops and killed a thousand of their people.
8. **What lesson did Samson learn about God?**

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.2 Samson, the Willful, Part Two

God is truthful but also full of grace. God's rules aren't to be taken for granted. But God does not desert His people. He restores them.

9. What final wish did God grant Samson?

To kill as many Philistines as possible.

[Who were destroyed: All the *lords of the Philistines* (Jdg. 16:27), who had by bribes corrupted Delilah to betray Samson to them. Evil pursued those sinners, when they were merry, secure, and jovial, and far from apprehending themselves in any danger. It was when they were praising Dagon their god and giving that honour to him which is due to God only, which is no less than treason against the King of kings, his crown and dignity.]

- *Challenging*

1. Who did Samson 'fall in love' with? Was this person a good choice? Why or why not?

Delilah, a Philistine woman, was a prostitute. No, she was one of the enemies of Israel. She didn't believe in God. He was a Nazirite: set apart for God.

2. What is the difference between love and **infatuation** (temporary passion)? Does a relationship need more than love?

Yes, a relationship needs a meeting of minds; Amos 3:3 asks, "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?"

3. What did the Philistine leaders want to know? Do you think Delilah had a choice? Why or why not?

They wanted to know how Samson got his strength and what made him weak. They were pressuring her. Perhaps she didn't have much choice but she could have told Samson about them.

4. What motivated Delilah to obey them? What ruin did she bring in her choice?

Money. She lost a man who loved her, and who may have treated her well. She ruined Samson's life as well.

5. What were the Philistines hoping to do?

They wanted to capture Samson.

6. Why did Samson continually trick Delilah?

He probably didn't trust her. Maybe he enjoyed teasing her and showing off his strength.

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.2 Samson, the Willful, Part Two

7. Why did Samson finally tell her the truth? Do you think he really believed he would lose his strength? Explain your answer.

She nagged and pestered him. He probably didn't understand the importance of his Nazirite vows because he had them from birth as a habit. He had always been strong.

8. How was Samson treated by the Philistines? What is the reason for their behaviour?

He was cruelly treated. He was their enemy who had bothered them many times and killed many of their people.

9. What lesson did Samson learn about God? Why do you suppose it took him so long to learn this lesson?

God is truthful but also full of grace. God's rules aren't to be taken for granted. But God does not desert His people. He restores them. Either Samson had not been taught these things before, or he was just not interested in finding out who God was and how to serve Him. David said in Psalm 63:1, "You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you."

10. What final wish did God grant Samson? What motivated Samson to ask for this?

To regain his strength so he could kill as many Philistines who followed Dagon as possible. Perhaps this was just revenge, but it's likely that Samson regained his sense of God's purpose for his life and wanted to accomplish something for Him, even at the cost of his own life.

[Matthew Henry says: "Who were destroyed: All the lords of the Philistines (Jdg. 16:27), who had by bribes corrupted Delilah to betray Samson to them. Evil pursued those sinners. He gained strength to do it by prayer, (Jdg. 16:28). That strength which he had lost by sin he, like a true penitent, recovers by prayer; "

**Theme of this story:** God restores what was lost. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me with thy free Spirit (Ps. 51:12).]



## Saul, the Persecutor

Acts: 6-10

### Background:

#### The Great Sanhedrin, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees

The Sanhedrin dates to the times of Moses. Every town and village had to have a local court. In each court would be judges. The Great Sanhedrin was the supreme court of ancient Israel, made of 70 men and the high priest; they met in the Temple. The Sanhedrin was made up from two different groups, the Sadducees and the Pharisees. ("What was the Sanhedrin?". [www.gotquestions.org/Sanhedrin.html](http://www.gotquestions.org/Sanhedrin.html). retrieved June 2017)

The Sadducees were a religious and political group from the wealthy governing class of what had been the nation of Judah. (Rome had subdivided Judah into Roman provinces of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Idumea, and Perea.) They were politically powerful, and many were priests. They held the majority of the 70 seats in the Sanhedrin, and the majority of the positions of priests. They believed religious life centered on the rituals of the Temple. They did not accept Scripture that they did not consider reasonable, e.g. the resurrection, and some of the apocalyptic prophecies (e.g. Daniel). They disappeared as a force in Judaism when the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD.

The Pharisees were made up of blue-collar workers. They held the minority position as priests. They treated the authority of the oral traditions (the traditions of the elders and their own interpretations of the Scriptures) as equal to the Scriptures.

The Pharisees admitted to their membership only those who pledged themselves to the strict observance of Levitical purity, kept themselves separate from sinners and from anything impure, tithed scrupulously, to attain the degree of holiness and righteousness required in those who would commune with God. They valued righteousness and tried to be pleasing to God. Three witnesses had to testify that Saul was of this caliber.

Many of the Pharisees really did try to do what was right and to please God, though some were hypocrites and far from God. The New Testament commends the Pharisees Gamaliel and Nicodemus; also, Joseph of Arimathea, who was probably a Pharisee, though the text isn't explicit on this.

The Pharisees infused their own views and principles into the political and religious life of the people. (Kohler, Kaufmann. "Pharisees". Jewish Encyclopedia.

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.3 Saul, the Persecutor

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12087-pharisees>. Retrieved June 2017)

Their teachings became the basis of contemporary Judaism.

#### 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? Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

#### What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

#### 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.           |
| <u>_c_</u> 2. Pharisees were strict about the law    | b. he said Jesus was the Son of God.       |
| <u>_e_</u> 3. Saul went to Damascus                  | c. but they didn't understand God's love.  |
| <u>_a_</u> 4. Jesus asked Saul why                   | d. because he followed the way of Jesus.   |
| <u>_f_</u> 5. God told Ananias to go to Saul         | e. because he wanted to arrest people.     |
| <u>_b_</u> 6. Soon after Saul was baptized           | f. and heal his eyes.                      |
| <u>_g_</u> 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. <u>_d_</u> authority | a. a person who has special skill or knowledge |
| 2. <u>_e_</u> stoned    | b. having no mercy or kindness                 |
| 3. <u>_a_</u> expert    | c. separate and go in different directions     |
| 4. <u>_c_</u> scatter   | d. right to give orders                        |

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.3 Saul, the Persecutor

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| 5. <u>b</u> cruel    | e. kill by throwing large stones at someone      |
| 6. <u>g</u> strict   | f. led by God's Spirit                           |
| 7. <u>h</u> baptized | g. severe in discipline                          |
| 8. <u>f</u> inspired | h. go through water to show a new faith in Jesus |

### Discussion

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

- *Easier*
  1. Do you think Saul was proud of being a Pharisee? Why or why not?  
Answers will vary. Experts are often proud of their knowledge. Paul said that he had been a Hebrew of Hebrews, blameless under the law. (But later, after his conversion, he said in the same passage from Philipians that he counted all this status as rubbish compared with the knowledge of Jesus.)
  2. Why did the Sanhedrin turn against those who followed the way of Jesus Christ?  
They had been against Jesus because He had not accepted their authority to make their own laws which sometimes went against God's laws. They felt the same way about Jesus' followers.
  3. How did Saul try to destroy the church?  
He went from house to house to arrest the believers, he had them imprisoned, and helped sentence them to death.
  4. Why did Saul need letters from the high priest?  
These were legal papers that gave him the legal power to go to synagogues, obtain the names of the Christians, and bring them back to Jerusalem to be imprisoned. These letters gave him the authority to do this not only in the synagogues throughout what had been the nation of Judah, but also to synagogues that were in other Roman-controlled countries, e.g. Damascus (Syria). (The Sanhedrin of Jerusalem had the highest legal authority among the local courts of the Jewish towns that the synagogues were in.)

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.3 Saul, the Persecutor

5. What happened to Saul on the way to Damascus?

A blinding flash of light struck him, and Jesus spoke to him out of the light. Afterwards, Paul couldn't see and the others in his group had to lead him into Damascus.

6. Saul had never met Jesus. Why do you think that Jesus said, "Saul! Why are you so cruel to me?"

Answers will vary. Jesus implies that any harm to His followers is harm to Himself. In Matthew 25: 31-46, Jesus said that he considers anything done to those in the family of God, good or bad, is the same as that done to Himself.

7. What did Jesus choose Saul to do?

Jesus told Ananias that He chose Saul to "tell foreigners, kings, and the people of Israel about me".

8. What did Saul do in the rest of his life?

He went all around the Roman Empire telling people about Jesus and establishing churches. He wrote much of the Bible's New Testament, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Even today, people read what he wrote and believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

- *Intermediate*

1. Do you think Saul was proud of being a Pharisee? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. Experts are often proud of their knowledge. Paul said that he had been a Hebrew of Hebrews, blameless under the law. (But later, after his conversion, he said in the same passage from Philippians that he counted all this status as rubbish compared with the knowledge of Jesus.)

2. Why did the Jerusalem Christians have to scatter to other places?

Saul was going from house to house to arrest and imprison the Christians and to have them sentenced to death. He was thorough, zealous, and vicious in his persecution. He wanted to eradicate them, not just stop them.

3. Why did Saul need to get letters from the high priest?

These were legal papers that gave him the legal power to go to synagogues, obtain the names of the Christians, and bring them back to Jerusalem to be imprisoned. These letters gave him the authority to do this not only in the synagogues throughout what had been the nation of Judah, but also to synagogues that were in other Roman-controlled countries, e.g. Damascus (Syria). (The Sanhedrin of Jerusalem had the highest legal authority among the local courts of the Jewish towns that the synagogues were in.)

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.3 Saul, the Persecutor

4. Saul may not even have met Jesus. Why do you think that Jesus said, "Saul! Why are you so cruel to me?"

Answers will vary. Jesus implies that any harm to His followers is harm to Himself. In Matthew 25: 31-46, Jesus explains that he considers anything done to those in the family of God, good or bad, is the same as that done to Himself.

5. Jesus told Ananias that He had chosen Saul for a purpose.

- a. What was that purpose?

Jesus told Ananias that He chose Saul to "tell foreigners, kings, and the people of Israel about me".

- b. Do you think Saul fulfilled it in his life?

Answers may vary. Saul certainly covered the known world in his travels. He went all around the Roman Empire telling people about Jesus and establishing churches. He wrote much of the Bible's New Testament, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Even today, people read what he wrote and believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

6. Why do you think Saul called himself Paul when he went out to establish churches in far places?

God often changed people's names when He called them to become someone new e.g. Abram → Abraham, Sarai → Sarah, Jacob → Israel, Simon → Peter. So, Saul may have wanted a new identity in fitting with his new calling. (But it was common to have two names in Saul's day, both a Hebrew name and a Roman name. It was advantageous to Saul to use a Roman name when travelling through Asia Minor (which was Roman) and witnessing to the Gentiles. Also, the name "Saul" was a prestigious Hebrew name, for King Saul was admired. The name "Paul" was a humble name, for it meant "small".)

7. Why is God patient with people? Why did He allow Saul to kill the Christians?

Answers will vary. If God had not been patient with Saul, we would not have the Bible as we know it. The Bible says that God is love, and love is patient. In the Old Testament, we can see how patient He was with Jacob (the schemer) and his descendants the Israelites (who turned away from Him again and again.) God doesn't change, the church in general hasn't been any more stellar than the Israelites, but He's just as patient with us.

A lot of the early Christians were killed by Saul. God allowed this, for He had the bigger picture in mind. So too, today, when we see the severe persecution

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.3 Saul, the Persecutor

of Christians in the many countries, we know that He is being patient with the persecutors.

- *Challenging*

1. **Why did Saul seek to persecute the church?**

He saw the church as taking his people away from what he believed to be true, and so endangering the very existence of Judaism. This was a very serious threat to him because at the time the Romans were threatening the existence of Judaism. This was because the Romans were occupying and ruling over what had been the Jewish nation of Judea. The Romans worshipped false gods, and they worshipped the Roman emperor - who was declared to be a god.

2. **Saul studied under Gamaliel, who warned the Sanhedrin about attacking Jesus' 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)**

- i. **How did Saul differ from his teacher, Gamaliel?**

Gamaliel was content to leave the issue of the church in God's hands. He took a non-violent approach to things. But Saul was a hard-liner and advocated violence.

These two different views reflected different views of Rome as well. In Jesus' time, there were Jews who were willing to live with Roman control and wait for God to restore things.

- i. **What do you know about the zealots in Judaism at the time?**

The zealots wanted to fight against Rome. When these rebels succeeded in leading a major rebellion against Rome in 70 AD, the Romans responded by killing thousands of Jews and burning down the Jewish temple - then tearing it apart stone by stone. When the Jews rebelled again in 135 AD, Rome levelled Jerusalem and forbade Jews from entering it. They killed the Jews by the hundreds of thousands and sent them into exile as slaves throughout the Roman Empire. Then Rome renamed Judea as Palestine - the Greek name for "land of the Philistines".

3. **Why do you think that Saul was not content with just driving the church from Jerusalem?**

He would have seen how quickly the church had grown in Jerusalem and realized that it could also grow quickly wherever it spread. He saw this as a

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.3 Saul, the Persecutor

threat to his idea of what the Pharisees believed Judaism should be. Perhaps it was a way of trying to subdue his conscience which he was at war with as well.

**4. Do you think it was God's will to scatter the church? Why or why not?**

God will take bad things and bring good out of them, e.g. when Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave. Wherever the church scattered they brought the gospel with them, and some of the Apostles followed them, probably to keep in touch with them. As the Apostles preached the gospel in those towns and villages, local churches were established throughout the Roman empire.

**5. How long do you think God had been working on Saul?**

Perhaps from birth, God was readying Saul for the task he would be called to. It probably was not coincidence that Saul's parents decided to move from Tarsus to Jerusalem, and to enroll Saul in school there. Ditto having Gamaliel as a teacher. On the Damascus road, Jesus says that Saul had been resisting him. Saul would have been in Jerusalem and would have probably heard of Jesus, even have heard Jesus in person when He was teaching in the Temple courts.

**6. How was Saul well-suited for the task God had for him?**

He was well schooled in the history of Israel, in the Jewish Scriptures, and the Jewish law. Because of this he could reason in the synagogues wherever he travelled. Growing up in Tarsus, he was probably fluent in the languages spoken in Asia minor and this allowed him to work there establishing churches. His Roman citizenship allowed him to travel freely throughout the Roman Empire and be protected by Roman law from unlawful persecution (at least to some extent). He had been taught the trade of tent-making, so he was able to make a living wherever he went. He was a disciplined person for he needed a lot of self-discipline to have made it into the elite Pharisee brotherhood; this helped him to persevere in all things.

**7. Why is God patient with people? Why did He allow Saul to kill the Christians?**

Answers will vary. If God had not been patient with Saul, we would not have the Bible as we know it. The Bible says that God is love, and love is patient. In the Old Testament, we can see how patient He was with Jacob (the schemer) and his descendants the Israelites (who turned away from Him again and again.) God doesn't change, the church in general hasn't been any more stellar than the Israelites, but He's just as patient with us.

## Chapter Four: Outsiders by Behaviour

### 4.3 Saul, the Persecutor

A lot of the early Christians were killed by Saul. God allowed this, for He had the bigger picture in mind. So too, today, when we see the severe persecution of Christians in the Middle East, we know that He is being patient with the persecutors.



## Rahab, the Prostitute, Part One

Joshua 2:1-24

### Background:

#### Joshua

Moses had led the Israelites through the Red Sea, then for 40 years through the wilderness on their return to Canaan (the Promised Land), battling many enemies on the way.

Joshua was one of the Israelite children in that Exodus. He was an attendant of Moses from his youth, and a zealous defender of Moses' leadership (Numbers 11). Moses chose Joshua to lead the Israelites against the Amalekites. Moses made Joshua one of the 12 spies sent out to explore Canaan. (Joshua was one of the two (of the ten) spies who encouraged the Israelites to take the land). And when he was about to die, Moses, under God's direction, appointed Joshua the commander to lead the Israelites in the conquest of Canaan.

The Canaanites believed they could make their gods bring rain by setting aside males and females as temple prostitutes and burning alive their babies and toddlers. God told Joshua to not spare any of the Canaanites. This sent a clear message to the Canaanites: The God of Israel was about to judge them, and the Canaanite's gods were worthless protectors.

Joshua's first conquest in Canaan was the city of Jericho. He first sent two men as spies to investigate the city. One place where they could spend the night without detection was a brothel, a place frequented by traveling merchants.

Perhaps from the travelers who stopped over at the brothel, Rahab had learned of the miracle of the Red Sea during the Exodus, and the victory of the Israelites over their enemies.

The brothel was built against Jericho's city wall, one of the brothel's windows in easy proximity of the top of the wall. On the brothel's flat roof, Rahab was drying some flax. Perhaps she had been the one who had spun flax into twine to make a long, red cord.

### 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?

## Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession

### 5.2 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part One

The purpose of these questions is to get students engaged with the plight of both the spies and Rahab. Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

#### What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

#### Passage Questions

Change these False sentences to be True:

1. Rahab told the king about the spies.  
Rahab hid the spies and lied to the soldiers.
2. She hid the men under some laundry.  
She hid the men under some flax plants.
3. Rahab didn't believe in God.  
Rahab believed in the God of heaven and earth.
4. The people of Jericho were sure they'd be safe in their walled city.  
The people of Jericho were shaking with fear and had lost the will to fight.
5. Rahab begged the spies to save her own life.  
Rahab begged the spies to save her family.
6. The spies refused to help Rahab's family.  
The spies agreed to keep her family safe.
7. Rahab tied a yellow rope to her window.  
Rahab tied a red rope to her window.

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

- |                                    |                                     |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. <u>  d  </u> to shake with fear | a. a person who takes money for sex |
| 2. <u>  c  </u> spies              | b. to capture a bad person          |
| 3. <u>  e  </u> flax               | c. enemies who look for information |
| 4. <u>  b  </u> arrest             | d. to be very afraid                |

## Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession

### 5.2 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part One

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 5. <u>a</u> prostitute | e. a plant that is used to make linen   |
| 6. <u>h</u> courage    | f. the next person to take over the job |
| 7. <u>f</u> successor  | g. go and live in a place               |
| 8. <u>g</u> settle     | h. ability to act while afraid          |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

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

### Discussion

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

- *Easier*

1. What did Joshua tell his men to do?  
He told them to spy out the city of Jericho and the area.
2. Where did his men spend the night?  
They spent the night at Rahab's house.
3. Where did Rahab hide the spies?  
She hid them under the flax on her roof.
4. Why did Rahab want to help the spies?  
She believed God was on their side and they would be victorious.
5. What did Rahab make the spies promise?  
She made them promise in the Lord's name to keep her family safe.
6. How does this show that Rahab believed in God?

## Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession

### 5.2 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part One

She asked the spies to save her family because she believed that the God of Israel was more powerful than Jericho's gods, and therefore the Israelites would win the battle. The spies were her only hope. She trusted them to be good people and keep their promises because they followed God.

[Matthew Henry comments: "Rahab is twice celebrated in the New Testament as a great believer (Heb. 11:31) and as one whose faith proved itself by good works, (Jas. 2:25)."]

7. What did Rahab tie on her window to show where she lived?

She tied a red rope to her window.

- *Intermediate*

1. What did Joshua tell his men to do?

He told them to spy out the city of Jericho and the area.

2. Where did his men spend the night? Why there?

They spent the night at Rahab's house. It was one place that always had a lot of visitors. Also, it was on the wall. Most importantly, Rahab welcomed them.

[Matthew Henry comments, "Had these scouts gone to any other house than this they would certainly have been betrayed and put to death without mercy. But God knew where they had a friend that would be true to them, though they did not, and directed them thither. Thus, that which seems to us most contingent and accidental is often over-ruled by the divine providence to serve its great ends. And those that faithfully acknowledge God in their ways he will guide with his eye. See Jer. 36:19,26."]

3. Why do you think Rahab hid the spies?

Answers will vary. She was worried about the future. She believed the Israelites would win and she wanted to be on the winning side. She believed their God was more powerful.

[Matthew Henry comments, "But Rahab showed her guests more than common civility and went upon an uncommon principle in what she did; it was *by faith* that she received those with peace against whom her king and country had denounced war, Heb. 11:31."]

4. Why did the soldiers head toward the Jordan River?

Rahab told them the spies had left the city, so the soldiers went to check out the river crossing.

## Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession

### 5.2 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part One

[Matthew Henry comments, " We are sure this was a good work: it is canonized by the apostle (Jas. 2:25), where she is said to be justified by works, and this is specified, that *she received the messengers, and sent them out another way*, and she did it by faith, such a faith as set her above the fear of man, even of the wrath of the king. She believed, upon the report she had heard of the wonders wrought for Israel, that their God was the only true God, and that therefore their declared design upon Canaan would undoubtedly take effect and in this faith, she sided with them, protected them, and courted their favour. Had she said, "I believe God is yours and Canaan yours, but I dare not show you any kindness," her faith had been dead and inactive, and would not have justified her. But by this it appeared to be both alive and lively, that she exposed herself to the utmost peril, even of life, in obedience to her faith."] ]

5. **What did Rahab know about the Israelites and what was her response to this knowledge?**

"I know that the LORD has given Israel this land. We know that the LORD your God rules heaven and earth, and we've lost our courage and our will to fight." Her response was to help the spies and beg for her family's safety.

[Matthew Henry: This woman of Canaan believes God's power and dominion over all the world (Josh. 2:11): "Jehovah your God, whom you worship and call upon, is so far above all gods that he is the only true God; for *he is God in heaven above and in earth beneath* and is served by all the hosts of both. She believes his promise to his people Israel (Josh. 2:9).]

6. **What did Rahab make the spies promise?**

She made them promise in the Lord's name to keep her family safe.

7. **How does this show that Rahab believed in God?**

She asked the spies to save her family because she believed that the God of Israel was more powerful than Jericho's gods, and therefore the Israelites would win the battle. The spies were her only hope. She trusted them to be good people and keep their promises because they followed God.

[Matthew Henry comments: "Rahab is twice celebrated in the New Testament as a great believer (Heb. 11:31) and as one whose faith proved itself by good works, (Jas. 2:25.)]

- *Challenging*

1. **What did Joshua tell his men to do? Was this a good plan?**

He told them to spy out the city of Jericho and the area. Yes, it shows he was a good general.

[Matthew Henry writes: [This shows] " The prudence of Joshua, in sending spies to observe this important pass, which was likely to be disputed at the entrance of Israel into Canaan (Josh. 2:1). Go view the land, even Jericho. Moses had sent spies (Num. 13:1-33); Joshua himself was one of them and it proved of ill consequence. Yet Joshua now sent spies, not, as the former were sent, to survey the whole land, but Jericho only; not to bring the account to the whole congregation, but to Joshua only, who, like a watchful general, was continually projecting for the public good, and, was particularly careful to take the first step well and not to stumble at the threshold."]

2. **Where did his men spend the night? Why there?**

They spent the night at Rahab's house. It was one place that always had a lot of visitors. Also, it was on the wall. Most importantly, Rahab welcomed them.

[Matthew Henry writes "Had these scouts gone to any other house than this they would certainly have been betrayed and put to death without mercy. But God knew where they had a friend that would be true to them, though they did not, and directed them thither. Thus, that which seems to us most contingent and accidental is often over-ruled by the divine providence to serve its great ends. And those that faithfully acknowledge God in their ways he will guide with his eye. See Jer. 36:19, 26.]

3. **Why do you think Rahab hid the spies? How was her home well-suited as a hiding place?**

She was worried about the future. She believed the Israelites would win and she wanted to be on the winning side. She believed their God was more powerful.

[Matthew Henry comments, "But Rahab showed her guests more than common civility and went upon an uncommon principle in what she did; it was by faith that she received those with peace against whom her king and country had denounced war, (Heb. 11:31)."] Rahab had enough flax on her roof to be able to hide the spies under; and her house was on the city gate, so the spies could escape over the gate rather than have to go through the city. Rahab had enough flax on her roof to be able to hide the spies under; and her house was

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### 5.2 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part One

on the city gate, so the spies could escape over the gate rather than have to go through the city.

4. **Why did the soldiers head toward the Jordan River? Why would Rahab have suggested they go there?**

Rahab told them the spies had left the city, so the soldiers went to check out the river crossing. The soldiers knew the Israelite camp was on the other side of the river, so they would believe that's where the spies were headed. And when they didn't find the spies, they would believe that the spies had made it back to their camp, and stop looking for them.

[Matthew Henry comments, "We are sure this was a good work: it is canonized by the apostle (Jas. 2:25), where she is said to be justified by works, and this is specified, that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way, and she did it by faith, such a faith as set her above the fear of man, even of the wrath of the king. She believed, upon the report she had heard of the wonders wrought for Israel, that their God was the only true God, and that therefore their declared design upon Canaan would undoubtedly take effect and in this faith, she sided with them, protected them, and courted their favour. Had she said, "I believe God is yours and Canaan yours, but I dare not show you any kindness," her faith had been dead and inactive, and would not have justified her. But by this it appeared to be both alive and lively, that she exposed herself to the utmost peril, even of life, in obedience to her faith."]

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?**

"I know that the LORD has given Israel this land. We know that the LORD your God rules heaven and earth, and we've lost our courage and our will to fight." Her response was to help the spies and beg for her family's safety. Since others in the city ratted the spies out, they did not share her faith. The ruler of the city sent the soldiers after the spies, so he did not share her faith.

6. **Do you think God moved her to think this way, or did she move God because she thought that way?**

[Matthew Henry: "This woman of Canaan believes God's power and dominion over all the world (Josh. 2:11): "Jehovah your God, whom you worship and call upon, is so far above all gods that he is the only true God; for *he is God in*

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*heaven above and in earth beneath* and is served by all the hosts of both. She believes his promise to his people Israel (Josh. 2:9)."]

2 Chronicles 16:9 says, "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him." When a person seeks God, God meets that person more than halfway. Jesus said, "No one comes to me unless the Father draws him". (John 6:44) The answer may not be 'either /or', but rather both.

7. **What did Rahab make the spies promise? What did this show about her?**  
She made them promise in the Lord's name to keep her family safe. This shows that she is tender hearted and loving towards her family; she risked her life by aiding the spies to save her family as well as to save the spies.
8. **How does this reveal Rahab's faith in God? In the Israelites? In the spies?**  
She trusted God to be good to her. She trusted that the Israelites were good and that the spies would be good people and keep their promises because they followed God.  
[Matthew Henry comments: "Rahab is twice celebrated in the New Testament as a great believer (Heb. 11:31) and as one whose faith proved itself by good works, (Jas. 2:25)."]
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?**  
She tied a red rope to her window. Jesus gave His life for us. The Israelites, and those spies in particular, had been influenced by God to share in the heart and mind of God.



## Rahab the Prostitute, Part Two

Joshua 6: 1-25

### Background:

#### Joshua

Moses had led the Israelites through the Red Sea, then for 40 years through the wilderness on their return to Canaan (the Promised Land), battling many enemies on the way.

Joshua was one of the Israelite children in that Exodus. He was an attendant of Moses from his youth, and a zealous defender of Moses' leadership (Numbers 11). Moses chose Joshua to lead the Israelites against the Amalekites. Moses made Joshua one of the 12 spies sent out to explore Canaan. (Joshua was one of the two (of the ten) spies who encouraged the Israelites to take the land). And when he was about to die, Moses, under God's direction, appointed Joshua the commander to lead the Israelites in the conquest of Canaan.

The Canaanites believed they could make their gods bring rain by setting aside males and females as temple prostitutes and burning alive their babies and toddlers. God told Joshua to not spare any of the Canaanites. This sent a clear message to the Canaanites: The God of Israel was about to judge them, and the Canaanite's gods were worthless protectors.

Joshua's first conquest in Canaan was the city of Jericho. He first sent two men as spies to investigate the city. One place where they could spend the night without detection was a brothel, a place frequented by traveling merchants.

Perhaps from the travelers who stopped over at the brothel, Rahab had learned of the miracle of the Red Sea during the Exodus, and the victory of the Israelites over their enemies. She placed her trust in the God of heaven and earth.

The brothel was built against Jericho's city wall, one of the brothel's windows in easy proximity with the top of the wall. The spies had pledged to Rahab by the LORD, that they would save her life and the lives of her family in return for saving them. All she had to do was hang a red cord from her wall window, and no one inside would die.

The utter destruction of Jericho is a hard truth for many, especially as it included children. (Note: the Canaanites were burning their own children to death.) At first, it seems foreign to a God of Mercy, but He is also a God who judges evil. It was crucial to God's plan for all humankind that the people into whom He had chosen to be born must remain true to Him. He knew the horrific practices of the pagan

Canaanites would corrupt the Israelites, and in fact that is exactly what happened when the Israelites did not obey God's order to destroy them completely.

### Before you read:

1. "One rotten apple can spoil 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 purpose of this question is to show when utter destruction of a part is necessary to preserve the whole. Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

### What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

### Passage Questions

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

- a) On the 7<sup>th</sup> day, the Israelites marched around the city 7 times. 3
- b) The walls of Jericho fell down flat. 5
- c) The two spies safely brought out Rahab and her family. 6
- d) God told Joshua exactly how to destroy Jericho. 1
- e) The soldiers killed everyone else in the city. 7
- f) Joshua ordered the priests and the army to march quietly around the city for six days. 2
- g) Joshua ordered the priests to blast the trumpets and the army to shout. 4
- h) Salmon married Rahab, and their descendant David became king. 8

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

- |                         |                                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. ___e___ march        | a. farthest point                  |
| 2. ___a___ limit        | b. children 1 - 2 years old        |
| 3. ___d___ trumpets     | c. a place where a lot of money is |
| 4. ___f___ blast        | d. musical instruments             |
| 5. ___b___ toddlers     | e. walk together like soldiers     |
| 6. ___c___ treasury     | f. a sudden loud noise             |
| 7. ___h___ sacred chest | g. time when sun rises             |
| 8. ___g___ daybreak     | h. a box that holds things for God |

Complete the following sentences using the words above.

1. The Canaanites burned babies and \_\_\_toddlers\_\_\_ alive, and God said their sin had reached its \_\_\_limit\_\_\_.
2. The priests were to carry their \_\_\_sacred chest\_\_\_ the first six days.
3. At \_\_\_daybreak\_\_\_ on the seventh day God told them to \_\_\_march\_\_\_ around the city seven times.
4. On the seventh day the priests had to \_\_\_blast\_\_\_ their \_\_\_trumpets\_\_\_.
5. All the silver, gold, bronze, and iron were to be put in the Lord's \_\_\_treasury\_\_\_.

## Discussion

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

- *Easier*

1. Why did the people of Jericho lock their gates?  
They locked the gates to keep the Israelites out.
2. What did God promise Joshua?  
With my help, you and your army will defeat the king of Jericho and his army, and you will capture the town.
3. What were God's instructions to Joshua?

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### 5.2 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part Two

March slowly around Jericho once a day for six days. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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.

4. **What happened to the people and animals of Jericho? Why did God want this?**

They were all killed. God did not want the Israelites to take foreign captives whose religion might cause Israel to turn from God and He didn't want the Israelites to become rich from their conquests. Having livestock and taking prisoners would slow down the conquest of Canaan. God had already pronounced judgement on Canaan. God did not hate Canaanites because they were Canaanites, but He hated their horrific sin. Sin is a very serious matter. His mercy was extended to those like Rahab who believed in God.

5. **What happened to Rahab and her family?**

They were spared because they were hiding in Rahab's house that had a red rope hanging from the window.

6. **Why do you think God would choose a Canaanite prostitute to be in the family of Jesus the Messiah?**

(various answers) Points to bring up: God included Rahab because of her faith. She chose to trust God and live in His way, so God included this former pagan in the family of Jesus Messiah. When she turned to Him, she had forgiveness of her sins and mercy instead of judgement.

- ***Intermediate***

1. **How did the people of Jericho protect themselves?**

They locked the gates to keep the Israelites out.

2. **What did God promise Joshua?**

With my help, you and your army will defeat the king of Jericho and his army, and you will capture the town.

[Matthew Henry comments "I have given into thy hand Jericho. Not, "I will do it, but, I have done it."]

3. **What do you think about God's instructions to Joshua?**

(various answers)

God's instructions: March slowly around Jericho once a day for six days. <sup>4</sup> Take along the sacred chest and have seven priests walk in front of it, carrying trumpets. But on the

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### 5.2 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part Two

seventh day, march slowly around the town seven times while the priests blow their trumpets. <sup>5</sup> 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.

4. **What did God warn the Israelites not to do? Why is this significant?**

He warned them not to keep the silver and gold and everything made of bronze and iron. They were to bring everything to God. This conquest was not for personal gain, it was for judgement.

5. **What happened to the walls of Jericho when the Israelites shouted? Why was this unusual?**

They fell down at a shout and they fell down flat. The people of Jericho had trusted in their walls, but no wall can stand against the will of God.

6. **What happened to the people and animals of Jericho? Why did God want this?**

They were all killed. God did not want the Israelites to take foreign captives whose religion might cause Israel to turn from God, and He didn't want the Israelites to become prosperous from their conquests. Having livestock and taking prisoners would slow down the conquest of Canaan. God had already pronounced judgement on Canaan. His mercy was extended to those like Rahab who believed in God.

7. **What happened to Rahab and her family? What does this show about God?**

They were spared because they were hiding in Rahab's house that had a red rope hanging from the window. God is merciful not to include Rahab and her family in all the death and destruction. God knows who his people are.

- ***Challenging***

1. **How did the people of Jericho protect themselves? What were they trusting in?**

They locked the gates to keep the Israelites out. They trusted in the work of their hands - the walls. But you have to wonder why they thought mere walls would protect them from such a large army. Even if the walls had held, the Israelites could have cut them off from food and water.

[Matthew Henry: Joshua opened the campaign with the siege of Jericho, a city which could not trust so much to the courage of its people as to act offensively, and to send out its forces to oppose Israel's landing and encamping but trusted so much to the strength of its walls as to stand upon its defense, and not to surrender, or desire conditions of peace.]

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### 5.2 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part Two

2. **What did God promise Joshua? Why did Joshua believe God?**

With my help, you and your army will defeat the king of Jericho and his army, and you will capture the town. Joshua had known God from his youth and had seen God's miracles. We learn in Part One that Joshua was Moses' servant, and Moses knew God well.

[Matthew Henry comments "I have given into thy hand Jericho. Not, "I will do it, but, I have done it."]

3. **What do you think about God's instructions to Joshua? Does it take more faith to follow simple instructions or complex ones?**

The instructions looked unlikely to work. What did the Israelite army know about resonance and the laws of physics? God often gives us simple instructions. We prefer complex instructions because they appear to be more worked out; simple instructions need humility and trust to be followed.

[Matthew Henry's Comments:

God appointed this way, (1.) To magnify his own power, that he might be exalted in his own strength (Ps. 21:13), not in the strength of instruments. God would hereby yet further make bare his own almighty arm for the encouragement of Israel and the terror and confusion of the Canaanites. (2.) To put an honour upon his ark, the instituted token of his presence, and to give a reason for the laws by which the people were obliged to look upon it with the most profound veneration and respect. (3.) It was likewise to put honour upon the priests, who were appointed upon this occasion to carry the ark and sound the trumpets. (4.) It was to try the faith, obedience, and patience, of the people, to try whether they would observe a precept which to human policy seemed foolish to obey and believe a promise which in human probability seemed impossible to be performed. They were also proved whether they could patiently bear the reproaches of their enemies and patiently wait for the salvation of the Lord. Thus, by faith, not by force, the walls of Jericho fell down. (5.) It was to encourage the hope of Israel with reference to the remaining difficulties that were before them. That suggestion of the evil spies that Canaan could never be conquered because the cities were walled up to heaven (Deut. 1:28) would by this be forever silenced. The strongest and highest walls cannot hold out against Omnipotence; they needed not to fight, and therefore needed not to fear, because God fought for them.]

4. **What did God warn the Israelites not to do? Why is this significant? How did this build their relationship with God?**

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### 5.2 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part Two

He warned them not to keep the silver and gold and everything made of bronze and iron. They were to bring everything to God. This conquest was not for personal gain. They learned to respect God, and this kept them from greed. [Matthew Henry states, "All the treasure of it, the money and plate and valuable goods, must be consecrated to the service of the tabernacle, and brought into the stock of dedicated things, the Jews say because the city was taken on the Sabbath day. Thus, God would be honoured by the beautifying and enriching of his tabernacle; thus, preparation was made for the extraordinary expenses of his service; and thus, the Israelites were taught not to set their hearts upon worldly wealth nor to aim at heaping up abundance of it for themselves. God had promised them a land *flowing with milk and honey*, not a land abounding with silver and gold; for he would have them live comfortably in it, that they might serve him cheerfully, but not covet either to trade with distant countries or to hoard for after times. He would likewise have them to reckon themselves enriched in the enriching of the tabernacle, and to think that which was laid up in God's house as truly their honour and wealth as if it had been laid up in their own."] ]

5. **What happened to the walls of Jericho when the Israelites shouted? Why was this unusual? What is the significance of this?**

They fell down at a shout and they fell down flat. The people of Jericho had trusted in their walls, but no wall can stand against the will of God.

6. **What happened to the people and animals of Jericho? Do you think that was fair? Why did God want to destroy them?**

They were all killed because their sin had gone on long enough. God judged them fairly. Also God did not want the Israelites to take foreign captives whose religion might cause Israel to turn from God and He didn't want the Israelites to become prosperous from their conquests. Having livestock and taking prisoners would slow down the conquest of Canaan. God had already pronounced judgement on Canaan. His mercy was extended to those like Rahab who believed in God.

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 this?**

They were spared because they were hiding in Rahab's house that had a red rope hanging from the window. God is merciful not to include Rahab and her family in all the death and destruction. God knows who his people are. God

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### 5.2 Rahab, the Prostitute, Part Two

honoured Rahab's faith and courage for all generations to come. And God honoured a *Gentile's* faith. This taught that God does indeed look at the heart and the mind, not the ancestry or position of a person.



## Matthew the Tax Collector

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

### Background:

#### Roman taxes

The Roman general Pompey conquered Jerusalem in 63 B.C. At first Rome made the region a client kingdom over which it placed puppet rulers. But even from a distance, Roman rule was harsh.

In 27 BC, under the military might of Augustus Caesar (Octavian), Rome was transformed from a republic to an Empire.

Rome's first emperor (ruled 27 BC - 14 AD), Augustus established law and order with his massive army, governors, and officials. This *Pax Romana* continued under his successor Tiberius (ruled 14-37 AD). Roman armies and citizens travelled throughout the empire on thousands of kilometers of its stone-paved roads. And Rome was continually spreading their peace with conquests of their neighbors.

In 6 AD the Rome tightened its control of Judah. The Roman Emperor Augustus appointed Quirinius as governor of Syria and ordered him to conduct the first Judean census. In this census the Roman authorities would record every person in Judah by their family and relatives, where they lived, their age, and their vocation. In this way Rome could maximize both taxation and control of the people. (Fabio Moretti. The first 100 years of Roman occupation. The Jerusalem Post. August 27, 2019.)

To pay for Roman expenditures, everyone in the Empire paid annual income tax, municipal tax, road tax, import and export tax, crop tax (1/10 of grain crop, 1/5 of wine, fruit, and olive oil), sales tax, property tax, water tax, meat tax, fish tax, salt tax, house tax, and something called an emergency tax. ([www.bible-history.com/sketches/anceint/tax-collector.html](http://www.bible-history.com/sketches/anceint/tax-collector.html); [www.accountingin.com/accounting-historians-journal/volume-13-number-2/the-monetary-system-taxation-and-publicans-in-the-time-of-christ](http://www.accountingin.com/accounting-historians-journal/volume-13-number-2/the-monetary-system-taxation-and-publicans-in-the-time-of-christ))

Roman officials were responsible for collecting these taxes, but they would tender the duty of tax collection within a community to a man native to that community. The local man who took this job was called a publican. The Roman officials did not pay their publicans a salary; the publican earned his own salary by adding a surcharge on top of the taxes he collected. He turned over only the required money to the Roman official, the rest he could keep for himself - no questions asked. The job of publican was so popular that locals would bid for the contract and the man who paid the most to the Roman official got the job.

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### 5.3 Matthew, the Tax Collector

Matthew was a Jewish publican working for the Roman denarius. The story opens with Matthew collecting taxes in Capernaum. And since Capernaum was next to the Sea of Galilee, Matthew had likely collected taxes from fishermen Peter, Andrew, James, and John.

#### Before you read:

1. Jesus said he didn't come to call the righteous, but the sinner. Which do you consider most people to be? Which do you consider yourself to be?  
Feel free to share your own experiences and encourage a few students to do the same. Keep it brief and steer them back to the topic, if they get sidetracked.

#### What Do You Think?

Encourage students to express honest thoughts. Steer them back to the story if discussion gets sidetracked.

#### Passage Questions

##### True or False

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

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

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. ___d___ heal     | a. payment                             |
| 2. ___e___ betrayed | b. followers who Jesus specially chose |

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### 5.3 Matthew, the Tax Collector

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 3. ___c___ merciful  | c. being kind especially if someone has hurt you  |
| 4. ___b___ apostles  | d. to cure a sickness                             |
| 5. ___a___ fee       | e. pretended to be a friend but then hurt someone |
| 6. ___h___ occupying | f. someone not accepted by others                 |
| 7. ___f___ outcast   | g. to put (someone) in a low place                |
| 8. ___g___ 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 \_\_\_merciful\_\_\_ to others.
2. Jesus gave the apostles power to \_\_\_heal\_\_\_ sick people..
3. Judas Iscariot \_\_\_betrayed\_\_\_ Jesus.
4. Tax collectors could force people to pay them an extra \_\_\_fee\_\_\_.
5. Matthew was an \_\_\_outcast\_\_\_ because he worked for the \_\_\_occupying\_\_\_ forces of Rome.
6. Jesus said that if you \_\_\_humble\_\_\_ yourself, you will be honoured.
7. The \_\_\_apostles\_\_\_ were a group of men chosen by Jesus.

### Discussion

The answers to the questions are only suggested answers. Allow the students to express their own ideas. Only correct those answers which are unbiblical.

1. What did Jesus say to Matthew?  
Jesus told Matthew to come with Him.
2. What did the Pharisees complain about?  
They complained that Jesus was eating with tax collectors and other sinners.
3. What did Jesus say about sinners?  
He said that He came to invite sinners to follow Him.
4. What did Jesus tell the Pharisees to do?  
He told them to go learn what the Scriptures meant when they said that God wanted His people to be merciful to others rather than offering sacrifices to Him.

## Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession

### 5.3 Matthew, the Tax Collector

5. **What power did Jesus give to his disciples?**  
He gave them the power to force out evil spirits and to heal all diseases and sicknesses.
  6. **Who were the apostles of Jesus?**  
Simon (Peter), Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot.
  7. **What do you know about what the apostles did later?**  
(Answers vary). They would take the gospel to the surrounding nations and establish and oversee churches. They would show that Jesus was the Messiah by healing and forcing out demons in His name. Most of them would be killed because they followed Jesus.
  8. **How does Jesus treat sinners? Why do you think God accepts sinners who want to change?**  
(Answers vary). Jesus is merciful to sinners. God accepts sinners who understand they sin and want to change. They know they need God. People who think they are good and perfect don't think they need God. Since everyone needs Jesus, but He only invites sinners, we need to realize that we are all sinners, and no one is truly, perfectly good.
- *Intermediate*
    1. **What did Jesus say to Matthew? How would this affect his disciples?**  
He told him to come with Him. He must have said more afterwards since Matthew became a disciple. His disciples would have been surprised and perhaps disturbed that Jesus would call someone who was considered a traitor to their nation. (Especially Simon the Zealot, since the Zealots were a group that were fighting against Roman occupation.)
    2. **What did the Pharisees complain about?**  
They complained about Jesus eating with tax collectors and other sinners. It was part of Pharisee doctrine that a righteous man did not associate with the unrighteous.
    3. **What did Jesus say about sinners? Why does He want to show them mercy?**  
He said that they were like the sick; they needed a doctor. That God wanted to give them mercy. That Jesus came to invite them to follow Him. He sees our failures, yet He has love for us despite this.

## Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession

### 5.3 Matthew, the Tax Collector

4. **What did Jesus tell the Pharisees to do? Why is this significant? Do we have the same problem of ignoring inconvenient Scriptures?**

Jesus told them to go and learn what the Scriptures meant when they say to be merciful to others rather than to offer sacrifices to God. This is significant because the Pharisees had studied long and hard to know the Scriptures and were recognized by all as elite authorities on the meaning of the Scriptures. Yes, we are all capable of turning a blind eye to needs that inconvenience us and Scriptures that challenge us.

5. **What power did Jesus give to his disciples? Do you think this power was given to all his disciples?**

He gave them the power to cast out demons, heal the sick (and cleanse lepers and raise the dead). Yes, the text says He gave it to his disciples, there is no mention that He gave it to only some of them. In Acts 9:40 Peter raises Dorcas from the dead. In Acts 20:9-12, Paul (who wasn't an apostle at the time) raises Eutychus from the dead. (That means that Judas Iscariot had been given this power too!)

6. **Who were the apostles of Jesus? Why were these people important to God's kingdom?**

Simon (Peter), Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot. They would take the gospel to the surrounding nations and establish and oversee churches.

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?**

(Answers vary.) The tax collector knew he was a sinner and he wanted God's forgiveness. He hated his sin and he wanted to change. Jesus not only accepts sinners, He calls them. The Pharisee thought he was perfect and had no need of God's forgiveness. Because he did not recognize his sin of pride, he was unable to receive God's forgiveness. This contempt for a fellow sinner made him unacceptable to God. Blindness to sin and self-righteousness has been with us throughout human history. It is God's Holy Spirit that convicts Christians and reveals our need for God. Without Him, we cannot change ourselves.

- *Challenging*

1. **What did Jesus say to Matthew? Why was this a bit surprising?**

He told him to come with Him. He must have said more afterwards since Matthew became a disciple. This was surprising since Matthew would have been hated - probably even by the other disciples - for being a tax collector in the area (tax collectors worked for the hated Roman rulers, extorted money from their fellow Jews, and were seen as betrayers of their people).

2. **What did the Pharisees complain about? Why?**

They complained about Jesus eating with tax collectors and other sinners. It was part of Pharisee doctrine that a righteous man did not associate with the unrighteous.

3. **What did Jesus say about sinners? Why was this important to understand?**

He said that they were like the sick; they needed a doctor. That God wanted to give them mercy. That Jesus came to invite them to follow Him. This is important because it tells us that the sinner is not only acceptable but desired. And it tells us that since He calls the sinner, but not the well, we need to see that we are in fact all sinners.

4. **What did Jesus tell the Pharisees to do? Why is this significant? Would they be offended by this saying?**

Jesus told them to go and learn what the Scriptures meant when they said to be merciful to others rather than to offer sacrifices to God. This is significant because the Pharisees had studied long and hard to know the Scriptures and were recognized by all as elite authorities on the meaning of the Scriptures. And they believed that a righteous person should avoid all contact with sinners. And they held their self-righteousness dearly. Most were certainly offended; they sought His death because He offended them. But some saw that He spoke the truth (e.g. Nicodemus).

5. **What power did Jesus give to his disciples? Do you think this power was given to all his disciples?**

He gave them the power to cast out demons, heal the sick (and cleanse lepers and raise the dead). Yes, the text says He gave it to his disciples, there is no mention that He gave it to only some of them. In Acts 9:40 Peter raises Dorcas from the dead. In Acts 20:9-12, Paul (who wasn't an apostle at the time) raises Eutychus from the dead. (That means that Judas Iscariot had been given this power too!)

## Chapter Five: Outsiders by Profession

### 5.3 Matthew, the Tax Collector

6. Who were the apostles of Jesus? Why were these people important to God's kingdom?

Simon (Peter), Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot. They would take the gospel to the surrounding nations and establish and oversee churches.

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?

(Answers vary.) The tax collector knew he was a sinner and he wanted God's forgiveness. He hated his sin and he wanted to change. Jesus not only accepts sinners, He calls them. The Pharisee thought he was perfect and had no need of God's forgiveness. Because he did not recognize his sin of pride, he was unable to receive God's forgiveness. This contempt for a fellow sinner made him unacceptable to God. Blindness to sin and self-righteousness has been with us throughout human history. It is God's Holy Spirit that convicts Christians and reveals our need for God. Without Him, we cannot change ourselves.

