

God's Travellers

ESL Workbook
(Teacher's Guide)

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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 What do you Think? discussion, the scripture passage, 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. They can also be used to clarify some parts of a Bible passage. The illustrations can also be used to remind the students of last week's lesson.

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 passages are all taken from the Bible, and each chapter covers a different literary genre found in the Bible. Our hope is to intrigue students who might otherwise never open a Bible to consider it as literature, and thus be exposed to its power.

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 Bible passage questions for the Easier Level start with exercise questions (True/False, Matching, Circle the Answer, Fill in the Blanks, etc.). These 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 can also be useful for intermediate levels.

The discussion questions are divided into sections: Easier, Intermediate and Challenging. These levels are decided by the amount of fluency in English the student may have. The Easier level questions are more fact based and the Challenging level 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 it 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 Easier 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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1.1 Terah and Abram: out of Iraq

Genesis 11:27-32

Background: Mesopotamia in Bible times

Sumer lay at the southern end of Mesopotamia. The name Mesopotamia comes from a Greek word meaning *between the two rivers* and was used to describe the geographical region between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers.

Sumer had the most advanced city states of its time. A major city state would have a population of about 30 thousand people. Ur would have had a population of about 30 thousand people or more. It had roads, wheeled carts, schools, a library, writing, literature, courts, a seaport, fish ponds, art, and beer. The Sumerians traded with city states in Lebanon, Arabia, Turkey, and India; some think Egypt and Ethiopia as well. It experienced many territorial wars with nearby city states and neighbouring small nations.

Sargon the Great of Akkad (a region north of Sumer) conquered Sumer and the entire region of Mesopotamia, establishing the Akkadian Empire.

Sargon put trusted men as governors and administrators over the city states he conquered and left Akkadian troops in the city to maintain control. With "peace" in the region, resources could be spent developing roads, bettering agricultural practices, restoring and building cities and establishing a wider sphere of trade. He also established a taxation system by which he could maintain a professional army.

The Akkadian Empire fell in about 300 years due to famine, the continual rebellion of its city states, and the constant invasions from the neighbouring tribes (most notably the uncivilized Gutians (who Mesopotamian writers called the *destroyers of civilization*.)

One of the city states that Sargon restored was the Akkadian city of Babylon. When the Amorites conquered Mesopotamia (~1900 BC), their leader, Hammurabi, made Babylon his capital city and named his empire Babylonia.

The story of Terah and Abram was written by Moses (circa 1400 BC). Based on Moses' description of the nations and kings in Abraham's time, most scholars think Terah left Ur sometime after Sargon the Akkadian conquered Sumer but before Hammurabi's (the founder of Babylonia) conquest of the Akkadian Empire, circa 2100-1550 BC.

Before You Read:

1. What made you decide to travel to Canada?
2. How far or how long did it take you to get here?

The first question is to get students thinking about what pushes people out of their home. The second is to give them appreciation for their own and Abram's experience of travel. [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 the discussion gets sidetracked.

Passage Questions

True or False

1. Terah moved his family from Ur to Canaan. __F__
He moved them from Ur to Haran.
2. Haran moved from Ur to Haran. __F__
Haran died in Ur. It was Nahor who travelled to Haran, but we don't know if Nahor went with Terah, or before him, or after him.
3. Lot was Abram's nephew __T__
He was the son of Abram's brother, Haran.
4. Leaving his country was Abram's idea __F__
God told Abram to leave. (Acts 7:3)
5. Terah worshipped God __F__
Joshua 24:2 says that Terah worshipped other gods. Later in Genesis we see that Nahor's grandson Laban, had several household gods (stolen by Rachel when she and her sister Leah left with their husband Jacob (Abraham's grandson).)
6. God wanted Abraham to move from Ur to Canaan __T__
Acts 7 says that God appeared to Abraham before he moved to Haran. Terah originally planned to go to Canaan.

Chapter One: Seeking a Promise
1.1 Terah and Abram, out of Iraq

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

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. <u> d </u> route | a. fill a place with people after the place lost people |
| 2. <u> e </u> caravan | b. moved to a place and made it your home |
| 3. <u> a </u> repopulate | c. an independent city with its own government |
| 4. <u> b </u> settled | d. a path taken by many travellers |
| 5. <u> c </u> city state | e. a group of traders traveling together |
| 6. <u> g </u> descendants | f. continually moving from place to place |
| 7. <u> h </u> ancestors | g. children, grandchildren, etc. |
| 8. <u> f </u> nomadic | h. parents, grandparents, etc. |

Use the words above to complete the following sentences.

1. In those days, many people, especially traders, travelled together along the caravan routes .
2. Ur of the Chaldeans was a large city state in the land of Sumer.
3. Terah's family was nomadic , moving from place to place with their herds of animals.
4. Terah was Abram's ancestor and Lot was Terah's descendant .
5. After the flood, Noah's family _____ the earth.
6. Terah started out for Canaan, but he settled in Haran.

Discussion Questions

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. Did the people stay faithful to God after the flood?

Chapter One: Seeking a Promise
1.1 Terah and Abram, out of Iraq

No. Within a few hundred years, there was just a small memory of Him. Most people, including Terah and his family, were idolaters worshipping statues.

2. Think about traveling in Abram's time:
 - a. How far did Terah's family travel? About 1000 km
 - b. How did they travel? Answers will vary. The story says he may have travelled along a caravan route that would have run alongside the Euphrates. Traders in the region also moved their good by boat along the rivers and may have taken on passengers as well. But it's likely that Terah and his family travelled with servants, slaves, and livestock and were too large a group for a boat.
 - c. How long might it take? (Answers will vary) They may have stopped to trade in different towns and cities. It may have taken months or even years if they were trading and driving herds along such a long route.
3. Why might Terah have worshipped many gods?

It was probably part of his culture. Sumer had many gods, each city state had its own god. Ditto the people in Haran.
4. Why might Terah have taken Lot with him to Haran?

Lot's father, Haran, had died.
5. Why might Terah have stopped in Haran?

Answers vary. Terah worshipped other gods, and may not have known, or been interested, in God's will. He may have been tired by the time they arrived in Haran and did not have the energy to continue to Canaan. He may have liked Haran so much, he wanted to stay there.
6. Would you have wanted to make such a journey? Why or why not?

Answers will vary.
7. Why did Abram believe in God, instead of idols?

Abram may well have heard of God, since Terah was only eight generations removed from Noah's son, Shem. God appeared personally to Abram when he was in Ur.

[In Canaan Abraham later meets Melchizedek, king of Salem, who the Bible says was priest of the Most High God. In Hebrew, Melchizedek

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1.1 Terah and Abram, out of Iraq

means "king of righteousness") So, the knowledge of God was still available in Abraham's day.]

8. Why might Terah have decided to move from Ur to Canaan?

Answers will vary. Perhaps the many wars around Ur were the cause for Terah to look for a safer place to live. But perhaps Abram convinced him to move, since God had told Abram to move to Canaan. Acts 7 says that before Abram moved to Haran, God had told him to leave his family and move to Canaan. So perhaps Abram told Terah and his family that he was leaving, and Terah wanted to go with him.

• *Intermediate*

1. The Bible says that only 7 generations had passed since the Flood and Terah's move to Haran. Did the people still follow God in Terah's time? Why might this be so?

No, the people had only a small memory of God, and worshipped idols instead. People quickly forget what God does for them. You see this over and over again in the Bible. Soon after the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea when Moses led the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery, the Israelites turned to worshipping the golden calf.

2. What was Ur like? Does it surprise you that people could rebuild such a civilization within a few hundred years of the flood?

Sumer was considered the most advanced civilization of its time. Students might guess some details from the picture. Some of the learners may know more about the Sumerians. Some of the city states in Sumer date to 5,400 B.C. It seems that the people were very sophisticated, and their civilization as high as it could be given the limited technology they had access to. Noah had been able to build a sophisticated Ark, so the people of those times were apparently quite capable builders.

3. Why might Terah have decided to leave Ur and go to Haran?

Perhaps he wanted to escape the ravages of war. Perhaps it was Abram's idea since Acts 7 says that Abram believed God, and God told Abram to leave Ur and go to Canaan. So perhaps Terah decided to go with his son. Haran had died. Possibly Nahor moved with them, or had moved at another time, since later Bible stories place Nahor in the city of Haran.

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1.1 Terah and Abram, out of Iraq

4. **Why might Terah have not followed his plan to go to Canaan?**
Answers vary. Terah worshipped other gods, and may not have known, or been interested, in God's will. He may have been tired by the time they arrived in Haran and did not have the energy to continue to Canaan. He may have liked Haran so much, he wanted to stay there.
5. **Describe what travelling in a caravan might have been like.**
Answers will vary. Semi-nomadic tribes were common to the era, so the caravan route along the Euphrates would have been well-worn and well-known. This river route would have provided easy access to water for Terah and his family and for any livestock they took with them. Camels would have been able to carry larger loads. But donkeys would have been better able to handle rocky paths and were probably safer for young children to ride on.
6. **Why might Lot have travelled with Terah to Haran?**
Lot's father, Haran, had died. Perhaps since Abram and Sarai were childless, they became Lot's caregivers.
7. **Why might Terah have worshipped many gods but Abram worshipped only one?**
Worshipping many gods was part of Sumerian culture. Every city state had its own god. Acts 7 says that God appeared to Abram when he was in Ur. Perhaps both Terah and Abram knew of God's existence (Terah was only 8 generations from Noah's son Shem) but Terah chose not to honour him.
[In Canaan Abraham later meets Melchizedek, king of Salem, who the Bible says was priest of the Most High God. Hebrews 6:20 says that Jesus is a priest in the order of Melchizedek (in Hebrew, Melchizedek means "king of righteousness").
So, the knowledge of God was still available in Abraham's day.]
8. **Would you have wanted to make such a journey? Why or why not?**
Answers will vary.
9. **God chose to work through Noah. Now He was choosing Abram to work through. Did Abram's descendants, the Israelites, follow God any better than Noah's? Why or why not?**
Yes. Within a few hundred years, Noah's descendants fell away from God. God chose one people to serve Him through Abram's grandson Jacob (Israel). He instructed them on how to teach their children about Him, and how to follow Him. He disciplined them regularly. Through them, Jesus would come.

Chapter One: Seeking a Promise
1.1 Terah and Abram, out of Iraq

- *Challenging*

1. Describe what Ur of Sumer was like.

It was considered the most advanced civilization of its time. There are several examples of its sophistication that can be deduced from the illustration, and some of the learners may know more about Sumer.

2. Why might Terah have left Sumer? Do you think God was in his decision?
Answers will vary. There was a lot of war between city states, and that unrest may have prompted Terah to move.

3. Describe what travelling in a caravan would have been like. Would you have wanted to go on such a journey? Have you ever ridden a donkey or a camel?
Answers will vary. Semi-nomadic tribes were common to the era, so the caravan route along the Euphrates would have been well-worn and well-known. This river route would have provided easy access to water for Terah and his family and for any livestock they took with them. Camels would have been able to carry larger loads. But donkeys would have been better able to handle rocky paths and were probably safer for young children to ride on.

4. Why might Lot have travelled with Terah and Abram to the city of Haran? Explain your answer.

Lot's father, Haran, had died. Perhaps since Abram and Sarai were childless, they became Lot's caregivers.

5. Why might Terah and his family stay in Haran rather than continuing to Canaan?

It was a 1000-kilometer journey, and Terah was an older man, he may have felt too tired to continue. The Bible says that it was Abram that God had called, so Terah may have felt no compulsion to keep moving to Canaan. And, Canaan, was a cultural backwater, so it may have not been too attractive for someone who had grown up in Ur of Sumer. Also, at some point Terah's son Nahor moved to Haran. The Bible says that Nahor had 8 sons. Terah may have wanted to stay with Nahor and these grandsons. (Genesis 24 tells of Abraham sending his servant back to "Aram-Naharaim", which is thought to be the region of Haran, to ask for Laban's sister Rebecca as a wife for Isaac. And Genesis 29 says that Jacob went to Nahor's grandson Laban in Haran.)

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1.1 Terah and Abram, out of Iraq

6. It was after the conquest of Canaan that Joshua reminded the Israelites of where Abraham had come from. Why might he have done this?

Answers will vary. Perhaps he was reminding them that those who worshipped many gods did not get any protection from those gods. The Israelites would have been aware of Sumer's fall to Akkad, then Akkad's fall to the Babylonians. Similarly, the Canaanites gods would not protect them either.

And perhaps he was reminding them that they since their ancestors were worshippers of many gods, they too could fall back into those ways if they mixed with the Canaanites.

7. Would you have wanted to make such a journey? Why or why not?

Answers will vary.

8. God chose Noah to work through. Now He was choosing Abram to work through. How did Abram's descendants, the Israelites, differ from Noah's? Why do you think God chose only Abram to work through?

Noah's descendants fell away from God within a few hundred years. The Israelites retained service to God for about 1000 years - though with frequent failures and need of discipline. Through Moses, God gave the Israelites instructions on how to retain knowledge of Him and serve Him. Through them, Jesus came.

9. Abram's descendants, the Israelites were one family. Are Christians one family?

We are not genetically one family, like the Israelites were. But 1 Peter says we are a chosen people called by God to serve Him. Like the Israelites, God gave us instructions on how to retain knowledge of Him and serve Him. But He also gave us His Spirit in each and every one of us. That is why Christians call each other 'Brother' and 'Sister'.

1.2 Abram, out of Syria

Genesis 12:1-9

Background: the land of Canaan

In Abram's time the Middle East was a mix of city states, nation states, and burgeoning empires. Throughout the region there were many semi-nomadic tribes that travelled along the caravan routes, stopping by urban centres to buy and sell goods with local merchants.

Terah, Abram, Sarai, and Lot were just another such traveling tribe. From Ur to Haran they likely journeyed along the well-travelled Euphrates river route. But the caravan route from upper Mesopotamia to Canaan would take Abram and his clan 600 km through the hot days, cold nights, sandstorms, and robbers of the Arabian desert.

Canaan was dry, rocky and dependant on rainfall for its water supply, with only a few good areas for agriculture. Contrast that with the fertile Mesopotamian region and its ever-present supply of water from the Euphrates and the Tigris. It was on a major land trade route, which meant that its people could buy and sell goods with the passing caravans. It was also on a good sea route, which again meant lots of buying and selling of goods. This trade would bring some economic prosperity to Canaan.

Although Canaan was the major trade route between Egypt and Mesopotamia, its city states remained independent, not joining together to form a nation. It was controlled by Egypt for hundreds of years, and the subject of attack by every power and super power that rose in the area (all of who wanted control of its strategic trade routes.) Not only did major land trade routes run through Canaan, within a few hundred years, the Phoenicians in adjacent Lebanon had outposts in Tarshish (southern Spain) and sent trade ships up the Atlantic coastline trading with the Celts of Spain, France, and the British Isles (which had lucrative tin mines).

In the time of Abram and the Patriarchs (the 12 sons of Abram's grandson, Jacob), the Egyptian Empire controlled Canaan. But within a few hundred years, wars with neighboring powers would decrease Egypt's control. Among the many attackers responsible for Egypt's decline were the Aegean Sea Peoples, better known as the Philistines. By the time that Abram's descendant Moses led the Israelites 12 tribes out of Egypt back to the Promised Land, Canaan was free of foreign domination.

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1.2 Abram, out of Syria

The Philistines were people from the Aegean Sea region of Greece. From early times the Greeks, who were short of land, sent their people out to colonize the Mediterranean region, and they had cities in what is now Turkey, and Libya. They tried to settle along the coastline of Egypt, and when the Egyptians ousted them, established cities along the coastline of Canaan. The Greeks called this coastline Palestine, Greek for "land of the Philistines". But only the coastline was called Palestine, the interior was known as Canaan. Later the Philistines would run out of land on the coastline and try to move inwards into Canaan. This was at the time that the Israelite tribes were ruling Canaan. It was the war with the Philistines that caused the Israelite tribes to unite into a kingdom. The Bible tells of Israel's first kings, Saul and David and their wars with the Philistines (remember Goliath!).

Before You Read:

1. What is one problem you have had because you came to Canada?

2. What is one thing about living in Canada that you are thankful for?

The first question is to get students thinking about the problems of being a foreigner. The second is to remind them of blessings. [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

- a) Put the story in the right order. The first one is done for you.
- b) Abram took his family to Canaan and stopped at the sacred tree of Moreh .
__4__
- c) Abram and his family stopped in Haran. __2__
- d) God promised Abram that the land would belong to his family. __5__
- e) God spoke to Abram in Ur and told him to leave and go to Canaan. __1__
- f) Abram built an altar to the LORD. __6__

Chapter One: Seeking a Promise

1.2 Abram, out of Syria

- g) God told Abram to leave Haran and said, "Everyone on earth will be blessed because of you". 3
- h) The king of Egypt took Abram's wife, but God got them both out of that country. 8

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

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. <u>e</u> blessing | a. something on land that is easy to see and recognize |
| 2. <u>c</u> curse | b. trusted, likely to be true |
| 3. <u>a</u> landmark | c. cause trouble or bad luck |
| 4. <u>b</u> reliable | d. a time of no food |
| 5. <u>d</u> famine | e. someone or something that does good |
| 6. <u>f</u> robber | f. someone who attacks and steals |
| 7. <u>d</u> altar | g. having an advanced culture |
| 8. <u>g</u> civilized | h. a table for worship |

Fill in the blanks with the words above.

1. The water supply in Canaan was not reliable.
2. When people saw the tree of Moreh, they knew they were close to Shechem. That tree was a landmark for travellers.
3. Abram made an altar after God blessed him.
4. There was a famine in Canaan because there was no rain.
5. Egypt became powerful and civilized because they had enough water and food.
6. Travel was dangerous because of sandstorms and robbers.
7. God would bless those who were a blessing to Abram's family, but curse those who cursed his family.

Chapter One: Seeking a Promise
1.2 Abram, out of Syria

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 God promise to Abram?

that they would be famous and a blessing to others. He would bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him. And that He would give the land of Canaan to Abram's family forever.

2. What do you think Abram would miss about Mesopotamia?

The reliable water supply in Mesopotamia meant that crops would not fail. The place was culturally advanced for its time and the standard of living was much higher.

3. Who did Abram take with him to Canaan?

He took his wife, Sarai, and his nephew Lot. He also took the slaves he had acquired in Haran.

4. Did Abram disobey God when he took along his nephew, Lot?

It is possible, since Lot was family and God told Abram to leave his family. Yet Lot was like an adopted son since Lot's father (Abram's brother) had died and Abram had no children. But Lot was not a blessing to Abraham, in fact his descendants (the Moabites and Ammonites) were often enemies of the Israelites.

5. Why do you think Abram built an altar after God's promise to him?

He may have done this as a marker of God's promise to give him this land. An altar was also a place to make sacrifices to God, so he may have sacrificed one of his animals there as a thank offering. It was also a place to worship God.

6. Did it look like God's promises to Abram could come true? Why or why not?

Outwardly it looked impossible for these promises to come true: The land was occupied by many tribes, so how could it become his? Sarai was unable to have children, so how could he have many descendants? How was the land of Canaan a blessing when it was rocky and subject to famines?

Chapter One: Seeking a Promise

1.2 Abram, out of Syria

7. Did Abram stay in Canaan ? What happened?

No, he had to leave for Egypt because there was a famine in Canaan and the crops failed.

8. What was good about having Egypt as a neighbour?

Egypt was a place of shelter when famines hit Canaan. Egypt was also a large nation with a large army, their control of Canaan would keep Canaan safe from attack from other people groups. Egypt also built roads for its trade routes through the area. This would bring prosperity to Canaan

9. What did Abram ask Sarai to do when they got to Egypt?

Abram asked Sarai to say she was his sister instead of his wife

10. How did God save Sarai?

God struck the king and his household with terrible diseases. The king realized something was wrong. After he found out that he had taken Abram's wife, he allowed Abram and Sarai to leave Egypt with all their possessions. (And Abram may have kept the presents Pharaoh had given him as a dowry for his wife.)

11. How did God bless Abram after they went to the Southern Desert in Canaan?

God made Abram rich with many herds. He would further bless Abram and Sarai with a son in their old age. Finally, God would fulfill His promise to bless everyone on earth through Jesus the Messiah, who would be a descendant of that son.

- *Intermediate*

1. What did God call Abram to do? What was Abram leaving behind?

God told Abram to leave Haran and go to Canaan. Abram was leaving his relatives behind (his brother Nahor and his family stayed in Haran) and civilization as he knew it. He was leaving behind the reliability of water and crops.

2. Did Abram disobey God when he took his nephew Lot with him? Why or why not?

Perhaps. God told Abram to leave his family behind. But the Hebrew word here for family is very broad and could mean "native country". And God would not have wanted Abram to leave Sarai behind. Abram was childless and Lot was fatherless. Abram's culture was a patriarchal one, and he had

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responsibilities. Lot was not a blessing to Abraham; he took the best land of Canaan for himself, Abraham had to travel for days to rescue him when invaders attacked the region Lot lived in (Genesis 14). And Lot's descendants (the Moabites and the Ammonites) became enemies of the Israelites at times.

3. **What were God's promises to Abram? Did it look likely that these promises would happen? Why or why not?**

God promised to make Abram and his descendants into a great nation; that they would be famous and a blessing to others. He would bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him. And that He would give the land of Canaan to Abram's family forever. Outwardly it looked impossible for these promises to come true: the land was occupied by many tribes, so how could it become his? Sarai was unable to have children, so how could he have many descendants? How was the land of Canaan a blessing when it was rocky and subject to famines?

4. **God told Abram that He would bless him in Canaan. Was the famine and crop failure in Canaan part of this blessing?**

Abram was obedient in going to Canaan, yet he faced by a famine. Often, we face trials in the face of obedience. But Egypt was good to its neighbours in that they would let them bring in their entire flocks and herds and stay in Egypt until the famine was over. And unlike Canaan, Egypt had a reliable water supply (the Nile), and the comforts of civilization (e.g. roads).

5. **Why might God have chosen Canaan for His people, rather than Mesopotamia?**

Abram and his descendants would have to depend on God for rainfall. The Israelites would have to become a hardy, hard-working and resourceful people to survive there.

6. **Why did Abram build an altar in Shechem? What did this show about him?**

He may have done this as a marker of God's promise to give him this land. An altar was also a place to make sacrifices to God, so he may have sacrificed one of his animals there. It was also a place to worship God. This showed that Abram trusted God despite the outward circumstances that would belie that trust. "In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "So shall your descendants be." Without becoming weak in faith, he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about 100

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years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore, it was also credited to him as righteousness." (Romans 4:18-22, NASB)

7. **OK, mathematicians, how long would it have taken Abram to travel 880 kilometres at a rate of 3-4 kilometres per hour, for 8 hours a day? What things would have slowed down his travel to a much longer time?**

$890 \text{ Km} \times \frac{1 \text{ hour}}{3.5 \text{ km}} \times \frac{1 \text{ day}}{8 \text{ hours}} = \sim 32 \text{ days}$. However, Abram would have been slowed by sandstorms and rainstorms. He may have encountered attacks by robbers. And he would have to stop frequently to rest and graze herds he had with him.

8. **What did Abram decide to do when there was a famine? What problem did this cause for Sarai and how did God intervene?**

Abram decided to go to Egypt, but he was afraid of the powerful Egyptians, so he asked his wife to lie about being married to him. As expected, Sarai's reputation for beauty caused her to be taken from her husband and put into the king's harem. God struck the king and his household with a plague, and the king realized he had caused divine offense, though he may not have recognized Abram's God. As a result, the king allowed Abram and Sarai to leave Egypt with all their possessions. (And Abram may have kept the presents Pharaoh had given him in exchange for his 'sister'.)

9. **Was Abram's decision to move to Egypt a wise one? Why or why not?**

It was accepted practice for the Canaanites to go to Egypt to wait out a famine, so Abram was following the wisdom of the people of the land. The adage says, "When in Rome do as the Romans do." If Abram stayed in Canaan, he would risk the welfare of his family and his herds and labourers. The Bible does have words to say about the folly of seeking pagan protection. When Abram went to Egypt, he came back a wealthy man, but he also came back having almost compromised Sarai, a bad reputation in the eyes of Egypt's Pharaoh, and with an Egyptian maid named Hagar...

10. **How did God keep His promises to Abram?**

God blessed Abram with many herds, and he is still famous today. He would further bless Abram and Sarai with a son in their old age. After hundreds of years, Abram's descendants would inherit the land of Canaan. Finally,

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God would fulfill His promise to bless everyone on earth through Jesus the Messiah, who would be a descendant of Abram and Sarai's son.

- *Challenging*

1. What did God call Abram to do? What was Abram leaving behind? What might his family and servants have thought about this move?

God called him to go to Canaan, a rocky rain-dependant land, and a cultural backwater. God told him to leave his country, his family, and his relatives. Abram was leaving all the comforts of civilization as he knew it in Mesopotamia, including a reliable water supply and fertile land.

2. Did Abram disobey God when he took his nephew Lot with him? Why or why not?

Perhaps. God told Abram to leave his family behind. But the Hebrew word here for family is very broad and could mean "native country". And God would not have wanted Abram to leave Sarai behind. Abram was childless and Lot was fatherless. Abram's culture was a patriarchal one, and he had responsibilities. But Lot was not a blessing to Abraham; he took the best land of Canaan for himself, Abraham had to travel for days to rescue him when invaders attacked the region Lot lived in (Genesis 14). And Lot's descendants (the Moabites and the Ammonites) became enemies of the Israelites at times.

3. What were God's promises to Abram? Did it look likely that these promises would happen? Why then did God make these promises?

God promised to make Abram and his descendants into a great nation; that they would be famous and a blessing to others. He would bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him. And that He would give the land of Canaan to Abram's family forever. Outwardly it looked impossible for these promises to come true: The land was occupied by many tribes, so how could it become his? Sarai was unable to have children, so how could he have many descendants? How was the land of Canaan a blessing when it was rocky and subject to famines?

God tested Abram's trust in Him with these promises. And God encouraged Abram to look beyond outward appearances and so not give into discouragement and disappointment with his circumstances.

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4. **God told Abram that He would bless him in Canaan. Was the famine and crop failure in Canaan part of this blessing?**

Abram was obedient in going to Canaan, only to be faced by a famine. Often, we face trials in the face of obedience. But Egypt was good to its neighbours in that they would let them bring in their entire flocks and herds and stay in Egypt until the famine was over. And unlike Canaan, Egypt had a reliable water supply (the Nile), and the comforts of civilization (e.g. roads).

5. **Why might God have chosen Canaan for His people, rather than Mesopotamia?**

Abram and his descendants would have to become tough and resourceful living in such a difficult land. They would have to be completely dependent on God since Canaan was dependent on rainfall for its water supply. They would become prosperous since they lived on a major trade route and therefore had markets for all its goods. They would have to become strategic and strong as they would have to conquer the Canaanites, be on constant alert for neighbouring enemies (Hittites, Ammonites, Edomites, Philistines), and be sandwiched between warring superpowers (Egypt vs. Hittites; Egypt vs. Assyrians; Egypt vs. Babylonians; Ptolemaic Empire (Egypt) vs. Seleucid Empire (Syria); and Rome vs. Parthians (Persians).

6. **Why did Abram build an altar in Canaan? What did this show about him?**

He may have done this as a marker of God's promise to give him this land. An altar was also a place to make sacrifices to God, so he may have sacrificed one of his animals there. It was also a place to worship God. This showed that Abram trusted God despite the outward circumstances that would belie that trust. "In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "So shall your descendants be." Without becoming weak in faith, he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about 100 years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform. Therefore, it was also credited to him as righteousness." (Romans 4:18-22, NASB)

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7. At the time, did it seem that God was blessing Egypt and/or Mesopotamia? Why or why not? Would anyone have realized that Abram was God's chosen vehicle for blessing?

Egypt and Mesopotamia were prosperous, they both had a reliable water supply and fertile soil. They were both powerful and so relatively safe from attack. They had roads, libraries, civilization. So outwardly it did look like God was blessing them.

Few would have noticed one old, childless man living in the somewhat barren hills of Canaan. But the Canaanites saw God protect and prosper him.

8. OK, mathematicians, how long would it have taken Abram to travel 880 kilometres at a rate of 3-4 kilometres per hour, for 8 hours a day? What things would have slowed down his travel to a much longer time?

$890 \text{ Km} \times \frac{1 \text{ hour}}{3.5 \text{ km}} \times \frac{1 \text{ day}}{8 \text{ hours}} = \sim 32 \text{ days}$. However, Abram would have been slowed by sandstorms and rainstorms. And he would have to stop frequently to rest and graze herds he had with him.

9. Egypt and Sumer both became leading nations of their time. What might have kept the Canaanites from becoming a nation?

They were composed of many different tribes, so they would not be naturally inclined to accept one leadership over them. Many were nomadic and semi-nomadic, so they didn't stay in one spot. They had Egypt controlling and protecting them from attack by other nations, so they didn't need to unite militarily. (Though Egypt proved to be a fickle protector to ancient Israel).

10. Was Abram's decision to move to Egypt a wise one? Why or why not?

It was accepted practice for the Canaanites to go to Egypt to wait out a famine, so Abram was following the wisdom of the people of the land. The adage says, "When in Rome do as the Romans do." If Abram stayed in Canaan, he would risk the welfare of his family and his herds and labourers. The Bible does have words to say about the folly of seeking pagan protection. When Abram went to Egypt, he came back a wealthy man, but he also came back having almost compromised Sarai, a bad reputation in the eyes of Egypt's Pharaoh, and with an Egyptian maid named Hagar...

The Wise Men, out of Persia

Matthew 2:1-12

Background: Herod the Great

After Judah had been conquered by Babylon, the Persians then conquered the Babylonians. Then the Macedonians (Greeks), under Alexander the Great, conquered the Persians. They changed the name of Judah to Judea. Following the death of Alexander, the Macedonian Empire was divided among Alexander's top generals. There were several territorial wars between two of these generals, Ptolemy (ruler of Egypt) and Seleucus (ruler of Syria). This war continued between their dynasties. In the end, the Seleucids won and took control of Judea.

In the days of the Seleucid king, Antiochus Epiphanes, the Jews rose up under the Hasmoneans, and threw off Seleucid rule. Judea became independent again, and the Hasmoneans became their kings (this succession of kings was called the Hasmonean dynasty). But their independence ended 80 years later in a civil war between two Hasmonean brothers for the position of high priest (effectively the position as king). The Roman general Pompey was brought in to establish peace, and Rome took full advantage, taking control of Judea.

Rome at first let the Hasmonean dynasty continue as high priests and ethnarchs (a demotion from king) in Judea, but in 40 BC, made the tetrarch of Judea, Herod I king of Judea. Herod firmly established his rule by killing off Hasmonean contenders to the throne. He also killed his Hasmonean wife, her mother, his two sons by her, and another son as well.

Then he turned his attention to colossal building projects throughout Judea, including his famous expansion of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (Zerubbabel's Temple). His refurbished temple was much grander than the original Second Temple, but still retained the name, the Second Temple - though it was also called Herod's Temple.

When the wise men came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him" (Matt. 2:2). Herod called the magi and asked them the exact time when this baby was born, then asked them to report back to him the exact location in Bethlehem - so he could "honour" the baby as well. When the magi did not return to him, but slipped back to their country another way, Herod ordered that all the male infants in Bethlehem, two years old and under, be slaughtered.

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Herod went on to establish a Herodian dynasty of kings and rulers. The Romans made three of his sons rulers; Herod Archelaus ruled in Judea; Herod Antipas in Galilee and Perea; and Herod Philip in territories north and east of the Jordan. Herod Archelaus was such a despot that he was later banished to Gaul and replaced with Roman prefects. Pilate was one such prefect.

Background: the wise men and their gifts

Number of wise men: Tradition says there were three wise men, because Jesus was given three gifts. But Matthew's account is the only account of this story and no number of wise men is given.

Significance of the gifts: The wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Biblical Archaeology says, "These valuable items were standard gifts to honor a king or deity in the ancient world: gold as a precious metal, frankincense as perfume or incense, and myrrh as anointing oil. In fact, these same three items were apparently among the gifts, recorded in ancient inscriptions, that King Seleucus II Callinicus offered to the god Apollo at the temple in Miletus in 243 B.C.E. The Book of Isaiah, when describing Jerusalem's glorious restoration, tells of nations and kings who will come and "bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord" (Isaiah 60:6)"

<http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/why-did-the-magi-bring-gold-frankincense-and-myrrh/>

(When Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt, they were still in Roman territory for both Judea and Egypt were Roman provinces at the time. But Herod wasn't ruler over Egypt, nor would he have known about them, or that they had gone there. Greek was a common language in Judea and in Egypt, and there were many Jewish enclaves in Egypt where Joseph could have found a place to live and work.)

Before You Read:

1. What is the farthest you have traveled just to see or experience something wonderful and amazing?
2. Was it worth the trip?

These questions are to get students thinking about how the Messiah (including the Good News He would make possible) was the Pearl of Great Price worth sacrifice of time, travel and treasure. Even non-Jews recognized the significance of this birth. Feel free to share your own experiences and

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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.

Questions

Match the sentence beginning with the correct ending.

- | | | |
|---------|--|---|
| ___d___ | 1. The Magi were scholars who studied | a. ...from the tribe of Judah and nations would obey him. |
| ___b___ | 2. The Magi from the east knew about Jewish Scriptures | b. ...because the Jews had been captives in the Persian Empire. |
| ___f___ | 3. Prophecy said that a star would come | c. ...that a new King of the Jews had been born |
| ___a___ | 4. Prophecy said that a king would come | d. ...the spiritual meaning of the stars. |
| ___c___ | 5. King Herod was troubled when he heard | e. ...Bethlehem where they found the child, Jesus. |
| ___e___ | 6. The Magi followed the star to | f. ... from Jacob and a ruler from Israel |
| ___g___ | 7. After God warned them in a dream | g. ...the Magi went home by another way instead of telling Herod where Jesus was. |

Vocabulary: Match the word with the definition

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. _____ prophecy | a. a person who studies |
| 2. _____ scholar | b. people who are taken away by force |
| 3. _____ captives | c. grows up from a seed or root |
| 4. _____ obedience | d. what is left after a tree is cut down |
| 5. _____ sprouts | e. put in danger |
| 6. _____ sceptre | f. something that is said or written before it happens |
| 7. _____ stump | g. a stick or rod that is used as a symbol of authority |

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8. _____ threaten h. doing what someone orders

Fill in the blanks with the words above.

1. The prophet Isaiah wrote that a king would come from David's family "like a branch that _____ sprouts _____ from a _____ stump _____".
2. Parents ask for _____ obedience _____ from their children.
3. The Jews were _____ captives _____ in the Persian empire.
4. King Herod was afraid that God's King would _____ threaten _____ his power.
5. The Magi were _____ scholars _____ who studied the stars.
6. Matthew wrote about a _____ prophecy _____ of the birthplace of God's King.
7. A _____ sceptre _____ is what a king holds to show his authority and right to rule.

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 does the word Magi mean?
Magi is the plural form of a Greek word that comes from the Persian language. It means a religious scholar. An astrologer.
2. Why were the Magi interested in stars?
They believed that the stars gave them information about the future.
3. Who were the descendants of Judah?
Both King David and Jesus were the descendants of Judah, since a descendant of Judah's descendant also has Judah as an ancestor.
4. Who was the king of Judea when Jesus was born?
Herod was king of Judea at the time of Jesus.
5. Which people did Herod ask about the birthplace of the Messiah?
He asked the chief priests and scribes.
6. What did Herod want the Magi to do after they found the baby?
He wanted them to tell him where the baby was.

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7. **What did Herod say he wanted to do when he found out where the baby was? (Do you think he was telling the truth?)**
He said he wanted to worship the baby. (Answers will vary. Students may figure out that if Herod felt threatened, he probably wanted to get rid of the Child. Also, the fact that God intervened through the Magi's dream hints at a threat to Jesus the Messiah.)
8. **What did the Magi do when they found Mary and Jesus?**
They worshipped Jesus and gave him valuable gifts.
9. **Why didn't they go back to Herod to report where they found Jesus?**
God warned them in a dream not to do it. Herod would probably have murdered them to keep them quiet.
10. **Why are the prophecies important to this story?**
The prophecies are the reason the wise men started to search for Jesus. This story shows that prophecies do tell the future. It also shows that people of different cultures and times, like the Magi and Herod, believed in prophecy. These prophecies are evidence that Jesus was the Messiah - God's King sent for a special purpose- since he was a descendant of Judah, of David's family and born in Bethlehem. (You might want to let students know that there are at least 40 prophecies about Messiah fulfilled by Jesus.)

• *Intermediate*

1. **Who were the Magi? What did they study and why?**
The Magi were a group of religious scholars who studied the stars for their portents and meaning. They believed that the stars gave them information about the future. They were astrologers.
2. **How did the Magi know that the Messiah was to be born under a star?**
They had studied the prophecies of the Jewish Scriptures.
3. **Why is it important to know who Jesus is descended from?**
The Scriptures identify Jesus as the Messiah. He was descended from David which fulfilled the prophecy that the Messiah would come from David.
4. **Why is important to know who Herod descended from?**
It identifies Herod as a Gentile king who was not connected to the promised Messiah.

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1.3 The Wise Men, out of Persia

5. **Why did the Magi travel to Jerusalem?**
They were searching for the Messiah.
6. **What was Herod's motive in asking the Magi to report back to him?**
He wanted to eliminate all threats to his throne.
7. **What was the Magi's reaction when they found Jesus?**
They worshipped him.
8. **What gifts did the Magi give Jesus? Why did they give these gifts?**
They gave him gold, frankincense and myrrh because he was the promised king.
9. **Why didn't they go back to Herod to report where they found Jesus?**
They were warned by God in a dream not to go back.
10. **Why are the prophecies important to this story?**
The prophecies are the reason the wise men started to search for Jesus. This story shows that prophecies do tell the future. It also shows that people of different cultures and times, like the Magi and Herod, believed in prophecy. These prophecies are evidence that Jesus was the Messiah - God's King sent for a special purpose- since he was a descendant of Judah, of David's family and born in Bethlehem. (You might want to let students know that there are at least 40 prophecies about Messiah fulfilled by Jesus.)

- ***Challenging***

1. **Who were the Magi? What did they study and why?**
The Magi were a group of religious scholars who studied the stars for their portents and meaning. They believed that the stars gave them information about the future. They were astrologers
2. **What did the prophecies teach about the Messiah?**
They taught who the Messiah would descend from and where he would be born but not exactly when. Daniel's prophecies gave some hints.
3. **Why is it important to know who Jesus is descended from?**
The Scriptures identify Jesus as the Messiah. He was descended from David, fulfilling the prophecies that the Messiah would come from David.

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4. **Why is it important to know who Herod was descended from?**
It identifies Herod as a *Gentile* king who was not connected to the promised *Messiah*.
5. **Why did the Magi travel to Jerusalem?**
They were searching for the *Messiah*.
6. **Why weren't the people of Jerusalem seeking the Messiah like the Magi?**
Although they were aware of the prophecies, they hadn't paid much attention to them. The people were waiting for the *Messiah*, but the chief priests and spiritual leaders seemed to be sitting on the information rather than actively seeking.
7. **What were Herod's motives in trying to learn where the Messiah was born?**
He wanted to eliminate all threats to his throne.
8. **What was the Magi's reaction when they found Jesus?**
They worshipped him.
9. **What is the significance in the type of gifts Jesus was given?**
They gave him gold (a precious metal), frankincense (a perfume or incense) and myrrh (an anointing oil) because he was the promised king. Traditionally these gifts signify a king or deity in the ancient world.
10. **Why are the prophecies important to this story?**
The prophecies are the reason the wise men started to search for Jesus. This story shows that prophecies do tell the future. It also shows that people of different cultures and times, like the Magi and Herod, believed in prophecy. These prophecies are evidence that Jesus was the *Messiah* - *God's King* sent for a special purpose- since he was a descendant of Judah, of David's family and born in Bethlehem. (You might want to let students know that there are at least 40 prophecies about *Messiah* fulfilled by Jesus.)

Mary and Joseph, into Egypt

Matthew 2:13-23

Background: "Rachel weeping for her children"

Jacob, one of Abraham's grandsons, was God's choice to build His people Israel from. Rachel was the love of Jacob's life, but because of circumstances, Jacob ended up with two wives, Rachel and Leah, 2 concubines - and 12 sons. God changed Jacob's name to Israel.

Rachel longed for children, but she remained childless, while Leah had 6 sons and a daughter, and each concubine had two sons. Only after this, did God give Rachel two sons, Joseph and then Benjamin. Rachel died giving birth to Benjamin and was buried in Ramah (a town north of Jerusalem).

The tribes of the sons of Jacob (Israel) became the kingdom of Israel. A civil war split the kingdom into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. God also gave the name Ephraim (Rachel's grandson by Joseph) to the northern kingdom.

When the prophet Jeremiah warned the northern kingdom of Israel (Ephraim) that the Assyrians would take that northern kingdom into captivity, he poetically used Rachel as representative of all the mothers of the northern kingdom, "This is what the Lord says: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter crying. Rachel is crying, and she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no longer alive." (Jer. 31:15, NIV)

When Matthew applies Jeremiah's prophecy to Herod's slaughter of the babies of Bethlehem, he is adding another layer of fulfillment to Jeremiah's prophecy. The Old Testament prophecies often have both near and far layers of fulfillment. By quoting Jeremiah's prophecy of Rachel's weeping, Matthew is saying that this prophecy had a near meaning (Assyria's destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel (Ephraim)) and a future meaning - a Messianic one, which was fulfilled by Jesus the Messiah (the Christ).

The Flight into Egypt and the Return to Judea

Although the angel had Joseph take his family out of Bethlehem at night, the move to Egypt itself would not have been that hard. Both Judea and Egypt were Roman provinces and used a common language of Greek. There were established caravan routes between Judea and Egypt. There were many established Jewish communities in Egypt where Joseph would have been able to find work. And the gifts of the Magi would have provided the needed finances for the move.

Chapter Two: Fleeing an Enemy

2.1 Mary and Joseph, into Egypt

After Herod the Great's death, his kingdom was divided among three of his sons. His son Archelaus was made ruler of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. Archelaus (Herod Archelaus) was even harsher and crazier than his father. And that is why Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth in Galilee.

A few years later Rome removed Archelaus and replaced him with Roman appointed governors, one of whom was Pontius Pilate. Herod Antipas, another son of Herod the Great, had been made ruler over Galilee. Herod Antipas is the one who had John the Baptist beheaded, and thought that Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead - and sought to kill Him too. Herod Antipas was visiting in Jerusalem at the time that Jesus was arrested. Pontius Pilate sent Jesus to Herod that night since Jesus was from Galilee and so was under Herod's jurisdiction. Jesus refused to answer Herod's questions. Herod sent Him back to Pilate.

Before You Read:

1. Do you think dreams can have meaning?
2. Can you tell about someone who has had a meaningful dream?

These questions are to get students thinking about dreams and how God can communicate in this way. 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 be True:

1. Mary and Joseph were from Bethlehem.
They were from Nazareth in Galilee
2. The angel ordered Joseph to go to his hometown.
The Emperor Augustus ordered everyone to go their hometowns.
3. Herod was happy to hear about the birth of a new king.
Herod was very upset to hear about the birth of a king.

Chapter Two: Fleeing an Enemy
2.1 Mary and Joseph, into Egypt

4. The wise men did exactly what Herod asked them to do.
The wise men tricked Herod and did not go back to tell him where Jesus was.
5. Joseph took his family for a vacation in Egypt.
Joseph took his family for safety to Egypt because Herod wanted to kill the child Jesus.
6. Herod's soldiers murdered all the people of Bethlehem.
Herod's soldiers murdered all the boys 2-years -old and younger in the Bethlehem area.
7. Jesus grew up in Egypt.
Jesus grew up in Galilee.

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

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. ___f___ weeping | a. crying when someone dies |
| 2. ___e___ (to be) based on | b. heavenly being, not human |
| 3. ___a___ mourning | c. promised to be married |
| 4. ___b___ angel | d. going to have a baby |
| 5. ___c___ (to be) engaged | e. depended |
| 6. ___d___ pregnant | f. shedding tears |
| 7. ___h___ Messiah | g. to fool |
| 8. ___g___ (to) trick | h. the King from God who would save people |

Fill in the blanks with the words above.

1. Jeremiah prophesied that there would be ___weeping___ and ___mourning___ because children were dead.
2. The place where the ___ Messiah ___ would be born was ___ based on ___ prophecy.
3. Mary was ___ engaged ___ to marry Joseph, so she went with him to Bethlehem, even though she was ___ pregnant ___.
4. King Herod knew that the wise men had ___ tricked ___ him when they did not come back and tell him where the Child was.

Chapter Two: Fleeing an Enemy
2.1 Mary and Joseph, into Egypt

5. Joseph knew when to leave Bethlehem and Egypt, because he saw an _ angel ____ in his dreams.

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. Where were Mary and Joseph from?
Mary and Joseph were from Nazareth.
2. Why did Joseph have to go to Bethlehem?
The Roman Emperor Augustus wanted to count everyone in the empire, probably for tax purposes. He ordered everyone to go to their family hometown. Joseph was from King David's family whose hometown was Bethlehem.
3. Why was Herod really interested in finding Jesus the Messiah?
He wanted to know where his 'rival' was, and to get rid of him. Herod had killed two of his own sons whom he thought wanted to depose him.
4. Who told Joseph to leave? Did he have much time?
An angel warned Joseph in a dream. There was little time.
5. Why did Herod kill all the babies?
He didn't know which child was the new king and wanted to make sure there was no chance his 'rival' would survive.
6. Did Joseph go back to Bethlehem from Egypt?
No, He went to Galilee, back to Nazareth.
7. Why are the prophecies important to this story?
They show that all the events of Jesus' life were preplanned by God. They show us that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

- *Intermediate*

1. Where were Mary and Joseph from and why did they leave their hometown?

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Mary and Joseph were from Nazareth. They left Nazareth because the Romans wanted to take a census.

2. **Why is Bethlehem a significant place?**

Bethlehem was told by the prophet Micah to be the birthplace of the Messiah.

3. **Why did Herod want the Magi to report back to him? Do you think they would have been safe to do so?**

Herod wanted to know where the Messiah was located. He might have had the Magi killed to cover up what he planned to do.

4. **Why do you think Herod got away with his murderous actions?**

He was king and had the support of the Roman government. However, God did not overlook this. It has been recorded for all to read in the Bible.

5. **Why did the angel warn Joseph?**

The angel warned Joseph because it was not part of God's plan to lose Jesus.

6. **Why didn't Joseph go back to Bethlehem after Herod's death?**

It still wasn't safe in Bethlehem. Joseph heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, therefore he was afraid to go there. Again, he was warned in a dream, so he went to Galilee.

7. **Why are the prophecies important to this story?**

They show that all the events of Jesus' life were preplanned by God. They show us that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

• ***Challenging***

1. **Where were Mary and Joseph from and why did they leave their hometown?**

Mary and Joseph were from Nazareth. They left Nazareth because the Romans wanted to take a census.

2. **Why is Bethlehem a significant place?**

Bethlehem was told by the prophet Micah to be the birthplace of the Messiah.

3. **Why did Herod want the Magi to report back to him? Do you think they would have been safe to do so?**

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4. Why would Herod want to kill all the baby boys? Why not just hunt for Jesus?

He didn't know which child was the promised king, and he wanted to make sure there was no chance his 'rival' would survive. Also, it would take time to locate Jesus and that would give the family an opportunity to escape.

5. How does God communicate with Joseph? Why do you think He uses that method?

God used an angel to communicate with Joseph in a dream. This wasn't the first time and the dreams had proven true. Dreams were often the way God communicated with people in the Bible (e.g. Jacob, Joseph). People took dreams seriously in this culture, and God still uses dreams to communicate in such cultures today.

6. Why did Joseph decide to go to Galilee?

Joseph heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, therefore he was afraid to go there. Again, he was warned in a dream, so he went to Galilee.

7. Why are the prophecies important to this story?

They show that all the events of Jesus' life were preplanned by God. They show us that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

Moses, out of Egypt (Part 1)

Exodus 2

Background: The Midianites

Abraham had a total of eight sons. His first son, Ishmael, was the son of Sarah's Egyptian maid, Hagar. Ishmael had 12 sons, and they became ancestors of the Arab nations (Dedan and Sheba).

Abraham's second son was Isaac, by his wife Sarah. Isaac was the son promised to him by God: "through Isaac your descendants shall be named" (Genesis 21:12). Abraham gave his inheritance to Isaac and was buried with Sarah. Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau became the father of the Edomites. God changed Jacob's name to Israel. Jacob had 12 sons, the Israelites.

After Sarah's death, Abraham had six sons by a woman named Keturah. The Bible calls Keturah both a wife and a concubine. This likely means that while she was a wife, her status was not equal to Sarah. And the status of her sons was not equal to Isaac. The Bible does not say what nationality Keturah was. Genesis says that Abraham gave gifts to these sons of Keturah and sent them away to the east. These six sons each became the father of an Arabian tribe.

His fourth son by Keturah (his sixth son overall) was named Midian. His descendants were the Midianites. They were an Arab people living on both sides of the Gulf of Aquaba. The Gulf of Aquaba is the northern gulf of the Red Sea and separates the Sinai Peninsula from Arabia.

When Moses fled Pharaoh, he traveled to Midian. There he served Jethro, the priest of Midian, for 40 years. Jethro gave his daughter, Zipporah, to Moses as a wife. The Midianites were worshippers of many gods. But because they were descendants of Abraham, they had some knowledge of the God of Abraham. However, Exodus 18 says that when Jethro heard all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, in delivering them from the hand of the Egyptians, he said, "Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods ..." and he offered a burnt offering to God.

Numbers 10 says that when the Israelites were leaving the Sinai Peninsula, Jethro's son Hobab acted as a guide for them, showing them where to camp in the wilderness west of Sinai. (Numbers 10:29-33).

However, when the Israelites entered Moab on their way to Canaan, the Midianites joined with the Moabites in their efforts to curse the Israelites through the services of Balaam and used their women to entice the Israelite men away from

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2.2 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 1)

faithfulness to God. Numbers 31 says that God had Moses attack and kill the participating Midianites for this, and the Israelites did so, killing five kings of Midian.

Judges 7 says that the Midianites later joined the Amalekites and others to invade the Israelites during the time of the judges. God had Gideon lead the Israelites to defeat them.

Isaiah 60 prophecies that in the Messianic kingdom, the Midianite people will make peace with Israel, praise the God of Israel, and believe the good news (the gospel!):

"Nations will come to your (Israel's) light, and kings to the brightness of your rising ...The wealth of the nations will come to you. A multitude of camels will cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba will come; They will bring gold and frankincense, And will bear good news of the praises of the Lord...For you (Israel) will have the Lord for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be over..."

Before You Read:

1. What reasons might force people to leave one place and move to another?

This question is to get students thinking about the theme of this chapter. 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. Moses' mother asked her daughter to follow the baby as he floated down the river. T
2. The pharaoh's daughter didn't know Moses was a Hebrew. F
3. Moses was upset when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew man. T
4. Moses ran away because pharaoh was angry with him. T

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5. The priest of Midian had eight daughters. F
6. Jethro invited Moses to stay with him because he had rescued Jethro's daughters. T
7. God had forgotten about the Israelites F

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

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| <u>b</u> 1. rapidly | a. hitting very hard |
| <u>d</u> 2. decreed | b. quickly |
| <u>h</u> 3. reeds | c. save from danger |
| <u>g</u> 4. cruel | d. made a law |
| <u>f</u> 5. tar | e. make someone part of the family |
| <u>e</u> 6. adopted | f. sticky, black material that is waterproof |
| <u>a</u> 7. beating | g. bringing pain; no mercy |
| <u>c</u> 8. rescue | h. a type of long grass-like plant |

Fill in the blanks with the words above.

1. The pharaoh decreed that Hebrew baby boys should be thrown in the river Nile because of the population had grown rapidly. This was a very cruel thing to do!
2. Moses mother made a basket out of reeds and covered it with tar.
3. Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses.
4. Moses saw one Hebrew man beating another Hebrew.
5. When shepherds drove Jethro's daughters away from the well, Moses rescued them.

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2.2 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 1)

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. Why were the Egyptians worried about the Hebrews?
There were too many of them.
2. What did pharaoh do to stop the Hebrew population from growing?
He decreed the boys should be thrown in the river.
3. What did Moses mother do to hide Moses?
She put him in a basket in the river.
4. Who found Moses in the river?
Pharaoh's daughter found Moses.
5. What do you think Moses' life was like growing up with the royal family?
Moses gained a position of importance in Egyptian society. He would become educated.
6. Did Moses forget about his people, the Hebrews?
No, he became upset when he saw his people mistreated.
7. What terrible thing did Moses do?
Moses murdered the man who was abusing his people.
8. Where did Moses go?
Moses fled to Midian.
9. Do you think Moses forgot about his people in Egypt?
(opinions differ)
10. How did God feel about the Hebrews in Egypt?
He knew their lives were terrible and He felt sorry for them. He remembered His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

- *Intermediate*

1. Why were the Egyptians worried about the Hebrews?
Their population was growing rapidly.

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2.2 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 1)

2. **What did pharaoh do to stop the Hebrew population from growing?**
He tried to have the midwives kill the baby boys. Later he decreed the babies should be thrown into the River.
3. **What happened to Moses not long after he was born? Do you think he was lucky?**
Although his mother set him in a little floating basket in the river, he did not attract the attention of crocodiles. Instead pharaoh's daughter discovered him and he was brought into the royal household to be raised as her son. Not luck! Divine intervention!
4. **Why is the story of his adoption important?**
His position in the royal household gave him an education and this was preparation for what God would ask him to do later in his life.
5. **What does the murder of the Egyptian show about Moses character and thinking?**
Moses, although royal, considered the Hebrews his people. His sense of justice was outraged. However, he didn't control his temper, and committed murder.
6. **What were the consequences of Moses' actions?**
He was driven out of Egypt and he didn't return for 40 years. He probably never saw his natural or adoptive parents again.
7. **How does Moses show another side of his character in Midian?**
Moses valiantly helped the daughters of the priest of Midian.
8. **Do you think Moses forgot about his life in Egypt?**
No, but he might have been content with his new family.
9. **Do you think God forgot about the descendants of Jacob and His promise to them?**
No, the Bible says He heard their groaning. God never forgets His people.

• *Challenging*

1. **Why were the Egyptians worried about the Hebrews? What did pharaoh do to stop the Hebrew population from growing?**
The Hebrew population was growing rapidly so pharaoh tried to have the midwives kill the baby boys. Later he decreed the babies should be thrown into the River.

Chapter Two: Fleeing an Enemy
2.2 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 1)

2. What happened to Moses not long after he was born? Do you think he was lucky?

Although his mother set him in a little floating basket in the river, he did not attract the attention of crocodiles. Instead pharaoh's daughter discovered him, and he was brought into the royal household to be raised as her son. Not luck! Divine intervention!

3. Why is what happened to Moses while he was young important?

His position in the royal household gave him an education and was preparation for what God would ask him to do later in his life.

4. Do you think that Moses identifies with the Egyptians or with the Hebrews? Why do you think that?

Moses, although royal, considered the Hebrews his people. He was outraged by the abuse he saw happening in front of him.

5. What kinds of consequences did Moses face for his actions?

He lost his position in the royal household and had to flee his country. He probably never saw his parents again.

6. Do you think the way he treated the daughters of Jethro to be an indication of his true character?

He seems to care for the underdog and was impatient with those who oppress. He learned to let God lead later in his life.

7. Do you think Moses would ever forget Egypt?

No, but he might have been content with his new family.

8. The Hebrews had been suffering for many years. Do you think God had forgotten about the children of Jacob or His promise to them?

No, the Bible says He heard their groaning. God never forgets His people

Moses, out of Egypt (Part 2)

Exodus 12:31-42

Background: Significance of unleavened bread

When we make bread today, we add quick-rise yeast to our flour. But in Moses' day, you added yeast to your bread dough in a very different way.

Yeast spores naturally float in the air, and they populate milled grain itself (their potential source of food). If you mix flour with water and let it stand a few days, the yeast spores already in the grain, and the yeast spores in the air, will start feeding on the moist grain. As yeast feeds, it reproduces exponentially, and in this way the yeast spreads throughout the dough. And as the yeast feeds, it releases carbon dioxide; the bubbles of CO_2 make the bread rise; and because carbon dioxide reacts with water in the dough to produce a mild acid, it imparts a pleasantly sour taste to the bread. This was the original sourdough bread.

Once you had this first loaf of yeast-rich bread dough, you could set aside some of this dough and use it as a yeast-rich "starter" to mix in with fresh flour and water. This would make a new batch of sour dough.

Exodus 12:18 says God told the Israelites to make their bread without yeast, i.e. they weren't to add starter to it. Exodus 12:34 says that when the Israelites left Egypt that night in Exodus, they took their bread dough with them, but without adding yeast (starter) to it.

But when God told the Israelites to commemorate that Passover night, He had more in mind than just having them remember what it was like to eat flat bread. He told them that they were not even to have any leaven anywhere in their house prior to the celebration. Moreover, anyone who ate unleavened bread during the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread (aka Passover) was to be cut off from the congregation of Israel.

1 Corinthians 5:6-7 says, "Do you not know that a little leaven (yeast) leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven (the starter) so that you may be a new lump (of unleavened dough) ..." The Israelites understood this meaning. When they left Egypt, they were leaving behind the heathen way of life in Egypt (the old leaven) and becoming a new people, sanctified for God's purposes (the new lump of dough). So yeast came to represent sin; 1 Corinthians 7-8 says, "...just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us

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2.3 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 2)

celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and in Hebrew "Bethlehem" means "house of bread". Jesus said He was the bread of life. In the last supper, Jesus' last celebration of Passover, when He told His disciples to "eat this bread in remembrance of Me", the bread He gave them was the unleavened bread of the Passover (the Feast of Unleavened Bread). He is not only the bread of life, He is the sinless bread of life.

Before You Read:

1. Can you tell about a hard time that you thought would never end?
2. What happened to end it?

These questions are to get students thinking about the difficulties of waiting and how quickly prayers can be answered at last. 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.

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

- a) 4 God told them not to put yeast in their dough and be ready to leave
- b) 6 Pharaoh (the king) ordered Moses, "Get your people out of my country".
- c) 5 God sent a plague that killed the firstborn son of the Egyptians.
- d) 1 God told Moses to go back to Egypt and speak to Pharaoh.
- e) 7 The Egyptians helped the Israelites to leave quickly.

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- f) 2 Pharaoh would not listen to Moses even after God sent 9 plagues.
- g) 8 All the Israelites left Egypt, and they still keep the Passover festival to remember how God saved them.
- h) 3 God told the people of Israel to kill a lamb or goat and put blood around their door.

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

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. <u> d </u> persuade | a. terrible events |
| 2. <u> f </u> doorpost | b. to cause pain to someone for doing evil |
| 3. <u> h </u> plague | c. to guard against danger or to pay attention |
| 4. <u> b </u> punish | d. to get somebody to do something |
| 5. <u> g </u> yeast | e. with deep sadness |
| 6. <u> a </u> disasters | f. part of a doorway beside the door |
| 7. <u> e </u> bitterly | g. something used in bread which causes the dough to rise |
| 8. <u> c </u> keep watch | h. a wide-spread sickness or terrible event |

Fill in the blanks with the words above.

1. The Lord kept watch over his people on their way out of Egypt.
2. The people made flat bread because they had no yeast .
3. God sent ten plagues to punish gods of Egypt.
4. The Egyptians cried bitterly when their firstborns died, and they told the Israelites to leave so they wouldn't have more disasters .
5. God sent Moses to persuade Pharaoh to let the people go.
6. The Israelites listened to God and put blood on their doorposts .

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 Two: Fleeing an Enemy
2.3 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 2)

- *Easier*

1. Why were the people of Israel crying to God for help?
They were slaves and were being cruelly treated.
2. Why did it take so many plagues to persuade pharaoh?
Pharaoh was stubborn and had a hard heart. The death of all the firstborn, including his son, convinced him that he was up against more than he could fight.
3. What did the people do to avoid the last plague?
They painted their door posts with the blood of a lamb.
4. Why did the Egyptians want the Israelites to leave quickly?
They didn't want God to send anymore plagues. They were afraid.
5. Why do you think the story talks so much about the bread?
God wanted them to remember the reasons they left Egypt in a hurry. The bread was a reminder of that. The Bible uses bread as a symbol quite often.
6. How many people left Egypt?
600,000 men plus women and children.
7. How long had the children of Israel lived in Egypt?
430 years exactly.
8. Who did God say he was punishing with the plagues?
God said He was punishing the gods of Egypt, but those who worshipped those gods suffered. The king of Egypt would not let the Israelites go because he thought his gods were more powerful. His pride stopped him from accepting God's power, and his people suffered greatly, unless they listened to God's instructions.
9. Do you think Pharaoh would have changed his mind if God had sent another plague that was not deadly?
(Answers vary.) Since the previous nine plagues had not worked to change his mind, it is unlikely anything less than the death of his own son would have made a difference. If students struggle with God 'killing children', talk about the deadly results of going our own way, both for us and for others. (What would have happened if Pharaoh had not finally changed his mind?)

Chapter Two: Fleeing an Enemy
2.3 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 2)

- *Intermediate*

1. Why were the people of Israel crying to God for help? Why do you think Pharaoh was not sympathetic?
They were slaves and were being cruelly treated. Pharaoh wanted to keep the Hebrews under control because he feared them - but Egypt was also benefitting from their free labour.
2. Why did it take so many plagues to persuade pharaoh? What finally persuaded Pharaoh to let the Israelites go?
Pharaoh was stubborn and had a hard heart. The death of all the firstborn, including his son, convinced him that he was up against more than he could fight.
3. What did the people do to avoid the last plague? What was the significance of the lamb's blood?
They painted their door posts with the blood of a lamb. It is the blood of Jesus, the perfect Lamb, that atones for our sins.
4. Why did the Egyptians want the Israelites to leave quickly? In verses 35-36 the Bible says the Israelites *"... had gone to their Egyptian neighbours and asked for gold and silver and for clothes."*³⁶ *The LORD had made the Egyptians friendly toward the people of Israel, and they gave them whatever they asked for. In this way they carried away the wealth of the Egyptians."* Was it wrong for the Israelites to take advantage of the Egyptians before leaving?
They didn't want God to send anymore plagues. They were afraid. The Scripture says that Moses told the Israelites to do this, and that God caused the Egyptians to do this. The Egyptians had become wealthy from slave labour, and the God of justice was giving the Israelites their wages.
5. Why is the fact that the bread had not risen so important?
It shows the haste in which they left Egypt. But more importantly, it shows that they obeyed God's instructions to not add the yeast. (And it had spiritual significance because in the Bible yeast often represents sin (Galatians 5:9).
6. How many people left Egypt? How would their leaving affect Egypt?
600,000 men plus women and children. That's a lot of slaves, and a major loss of labour! Their economy would have been hit hard.

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2.3 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 2)

7. How long had the children of Israel lived in Egypt? Why do you think God left them there so long?
430 years. (opinions vary)
8. Who did God say He was punishing with the plagues? Who suffered because of them?
God said He was punishing the gods of Egypt, but those who worshipped those gods suffered. The king of Egypt would not let the Israelites go because he thought his gods were more powerful. His pride stopped him from accepting God's power, and his people suffered greatly, unless they listened to God's instructions. Rejecting God eventually has terrible results.

- *Challenging*

1. Why were the people of Israel crying out to God? What is the connection between sin and groaning?
They were slaves and were being cruelly treated. In the book of Romans we learn that the earth is groaning because of sin. Groaning is a sign of the effects of sin and our need for salvation.
2. Why did it take so many plagues to persuade pharaoh? What was the effect of the last plague?
Pharaoh is very God resistant. It takes the death of his son to even break through to his hardened heart.
3. How did the Israelites protect themselves from the last plague? What is the significance of the lamb's blood? Why was the blood put on the doorposts?
They covered their door posts with the blood of the lamb. Likewise, the blood of the Lamb of God protects those who believe in Him. The blood protected all those who were inside the house. (The destroying angel passed over the houses that had the blood on the doorway, hence the name Passover.)
4. In verses 35-36 the Bible says the Israelites "... had gone to their Egyptian neighbours and asked for gold and silver and for clothes. ³⁶ The LORD had made the Egyptians friendly toward the people of Israel, and they gave them whatever they asked for. In this way they carried away the wealth of the Egyptians." What would motivate the Egyptians to give away their gold

Chapter Two: Fleeing an Enemy
2.3 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 2)

and silver? Was it just for the Israelites to take advantage of the Egyptians in this way?

Perhaps they were begging the Israelites to leave quickly or by giving them gifts trying to curry favour with Israel's God. The Scripture says that Moses told the Israelites to do this, and that God caused the Egyptians to do this. The Egyptians had become wealthy from slave labour, and the God of justice was giving the Israelites their wages.

5. Why is the fact that the bread had not risen so important? What do you think the bread symbolizes?

They left in haste. Yeast in Scripture symbolizes sin. Moses told the people at this time they would celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a remembrance of their flight from Egypt.

6. How many people left Egypt? How would their leaving affect Egypt? Was this fair to Egypt?

600,000 men plus women and children. There would be a big effect on the Egyptian economy. God invented fairness; and this was His doing. Psalm 94:10 says, "Does he who disciplines nations not punish?" Genesis 13 and 14 says that the Lord told Abraham that his descendants would be servants in a land not theirs, and they would be afflicted for 400 years, "But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions".

7. How long had the people of Israel lived in Egypt? Why do you think God left them there so long? How do we benefit from their long affliction?

430 years. Answers will vary on why God left them there that long. But in Genesis 14-16 God says that he would use this long period of affliction to punish Egypt with, to let the "iniquity of the Amorites [reach] completion" (God had the Israelites drive the Amorites out of Canaan), and that the Israelites would come out with great possessions. Got Questions points out that although the Israelites suffered a lot, the Bible would bring the stories of Joseph, Moses, and the crossing of the Red Sea to all generations.

8. Who did God say He was punishing with the plagues? Who suffered because of them?

God said He was punishing the gods of Egypt, but those who worshipped those gods suffered. The king of Egypt would not let the Israelites go because he thought his gods were more powerful. His pride stopped him

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2.3 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 2)

from accepting *God's* power, and his people suffered greatly, unless they listened to *God's* instructions. Rejecting *God* eventually has terrible results.

Moses, out of Egypt (Part 3)

Exodus 14:5-31

Background: Where did the Israelites cross the Red Sea?

Proverbs 25:2 says that it is the glory of God to hide a matter and the glory of kings to search it out. Many biblical archaeologists have tried to locate where the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. They approach this question by trying to find a conclusion that fits all the information available. But several critical pieces of information are uncertain; for example:

1. The identifying landmarks Moses gave have since been lost to time:

Moses said the Israelites crossed the Red Sea before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal-zephon by the sea (Exodus chapter 14:1-4; 21). Today, thousands of years later, many have tried to determine where these places could have been, but there is much disagreement.

2. The Hebrew expression, "the Red Sea" has a range of meaning:

Moses said the Israelites crossed the sea; Joshua said this sea was the Red Sea (Joshua 2:10; 4:23). The Hebrew word "sea" could mean any large body of water, including the Nile River or a lake. The Hebrew name, the "Red Sea", can mean "red sea" or "sea of reeds".

While we do know that what body of water they crossed, its bottom had to be flat and smooth enough for the Israelites and their herds to navigate - and have gentle enough slopes for them to be able to both descend into and ascend out of the it. And the body of water had to be deep enough to destroy Pharaoh's army, and it had to be long enough that the Egyptians could not just have gone around it.

3. We don't know how far the Israelites had travelled when the Egyptian army caught up with them:

Pharaoh and his army with more than 600 chariots chased after the Israelites when Pharaoh was told they had fled (Exodus 14:4-9), but we don't know how long that was after the Israelites had left. And we don't know how long it took the Egyptian army to catch up with them. Therefore, we don't know how far the Israelites had gotten before they were forced to cross the Red Sea.

These big uncertainties have prevented archaeologists from settling on a theory they can all agree to. And agreement is important in establishing the validity of any

Chapter Two: Fleeing an Enemy

2.4 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 3)

theory; a respected scientific journal will first subject a paper submitted to it to a vigorous peer review before publishing it. Proverbs 18:17 says, "The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him" (NASB). 1 Thessalonians 5:21 says, "But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (NASB).

Although we therefore don't know where the crossing of the Red Sea was, there are 13 references to the Exodus in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul referred specifically to the crossing when he said, "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³and all ate the same spiritual food; ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:1-4, NASB).

As an aside, since there were 600,000 Israelite men on foot, not including children (Exodus 12:37 NASB) - that was a large loss of labour force for the Egyptians; enough indeed to make the Egyptians chase after them with a large army. The loss of the labour force, and the Egyptian army, and the Egyptian Pharaoh would have devastated Egypt, bringing truth to God's promise to Abraham, "And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse" (Genesis 12:2 NASB).

Before You Read:

1. Have you ever had a 'narrow escape'? What happened?

This question is to get students thinking about the emotions of this story and about the need to trust God in scary situations. 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

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 Two: Fleeing an Enemy
2.4 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 3)

Match the sentence beginning with the correct ending:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. <u>c</u> God had chosen Moses | i. ... they told Moses it was his fault. |
| 2. <u>d</u> Pharaoh and his officials | j. ... by putting His cloud between them. |
| 3. <u>a</u> When the Israelites saw the army | k. ...to be His prophet and lead the people. |
| 4. <u>f</u> The Israelites thought that | l. ...changed their minds about letting the Israelites leave. |
| 5. <u>b</u> God stopped the army from attacking the Israelites | m. ... but the Egyptian army drowned in the sea. |
| 6. <u>g</u> Moses stretched out his stick | n. ... it was better to be slaves than die. |
| 7. <u>e</u> The Israelites crossed on dry ground | o. ... and a strong wind divided the sea. |

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

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. <u>e</u> chariots | a. unable to think because of fear |
| 2. <u>b</u> complained | b. express unhappiness |
| 3. <u>h</u> bother | c. unreasonable |
| 4. <u>g</u> cavalry | d. made his arm as long as possible |
| 5. <u>c</u> stubborn | e. fast vehicles used in war |
| 6. <u>f</u> fiery | f. with fire |
| 7. <u>d</u> stretched | g. soldiers on horses |
| 8. <u>a</u> panic | h. to cause trouble for someone |

Fill in the blanks with the words above.

8. Pharaoh's army followed the people of Israel with chariots and cavalry
9. The people complained to Moses that they were going to die in the desert.

Chapter Two: Fleeing an Enemy
2.4 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 3)

10. Pharaoh was very ___stubborn___ when he went after the people, but Moses promised them that the king would never ___bother___ them again.
11. Moses ___stretched___ out his arm in the direction of the sea and the water formed walls on each side.
12. God looked down from the ___fiery___ cloud and the army was in a ___panic___.

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. Why did pharaoh change his mind?
When he first let them go, he was probably just afraid of what God would do next; but he may not have lost his determination to keep them. When each plague occurred, Pharaoh would promise to let the people go; but each time the plague subsided, Pharaoh would break his promise.
2. Were the Israelites afraid at first before they saw the army?
Very afraid. They thought they would die.
3. What did they say to Moses when they saw the army?
They said to Moses, "Wasn't there enough room in Egypt to bury us? Is that why you brought us out here to die in the desert? Why did you bring us out of Egypt anyway? ¹² While we were there, didn't we tell you to leave us alone? We had rather be slaves in Egypt than die in this desert!"
4. Did God want his people to fight the Egyptians?
No. He wanted them to trust His solution.
5. What action did God want Moses to take?
He wanted him to stretch out his hand over the sea.
6. What happened when Moses stretched out his arm?
The sea parted, and the Israelites walked across a dry ocean floor with a wall of water on either side.

Chapter Two: Fleeing an Enemy
2.4 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 3)

7. What happened when the Egyptian army went into the sea after the Israelites?
The LORD made them panic and the wheels of the chariots got stuck and slowed the army down.
8. When did the Egyptians realize God was against them?
When God threw them into confusion by jamming the wheels of their chariots.
9. How did the people respond when they saw what happened to the Egyptians?
After God destroyed the Egyptian army they had a lot more faith. (But it didn't last long.)
10. What lesson is in this story for us today?
Answers vary- but trust God: He has a plan.

- *Intermediate*

1. Why did pharaoh change his mind? Do you think he hadn't learned anything from the plagues?
Answers will vary. He was motivated to get his slave labour back. His fear of God was smaller than his fear of the economic cost of losing the Israelites. He wasn't a tower of wisdom.
2. What did the Israelites say to Moses when they saw the Egyptian army? What did they mean? Had they not learned anything from the plagues and Passover?
They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" They meant they didn't believe Moses or God; this despite the miracles of the plagues and of the Passover.
3. Why didn't God want his people to fight the Egyptians? Do you think the Israelites trusted God?
God had some big plans. He wanted them to depend on Him. These people had been slaves not soldiers. But the Israelites were not showing trust when they cried out against Moses.

Chapter Two: Fleeing an Enemy
2.4 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 3)

4. What action did God want Moses to take? What did God tell Moses would happen?
He wanted him to stretch out his hand over the sea. God told Moses that the water would divide, and they would walk through the sea on dry land.
5. When did the Egyptians realize God was against them?
When God threw them into confusion by jamming the wheels of their chariots.
6. What were the consequences of Moses' stretching out his arm? What does this show about Moses' faith?
Moses trusted God. He had a plan. He believed that God hadn't delivered them so they would die.
7. Do you think the people of Israel had more faith in God at this point? Do you think they would be more afraid or more trusting in God?
They didn't trust God but maybe were afraid of Him. After God destroyed the Egyptian army they had a lot more faith but were still probably afraid of Him.
8. What lesson is in this story for us today?
(Answers vary- but trust God: He has a plan.)

- *Challenging*

1. Why did Pharaoh change his mind? Why hadn't he learned anything from the plagues? What does this say about the miracles and faith?
Answers will vary. He was motivated to get his slave labour back. His fear of God was smaller than his fear of the economic cost of losing the Israelites. The miracles did create enough faith in Pharaoh to originally let the Israelites go, but the faith that came from witnessing miracles was short lived.
2. What did the people say to Moses when they saw the army? What did their words show? Why hadn't they learned anything from the plagues or the Passover?
They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? ¹² Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!" That meant they didn't believe Moses

Chapter Two: Fleeing an Enemy
2.4 Moses, out of Egypt (Part 3)

or God; their faith from these miracles was also short lived. But unlike Pharaoh, they had the history of God working with their forefathers, and the prophecies given to Abraham (Genesis 13-16) that were being fulfilled before their eyes. They were hard hearted.

3. **Why didn't God want his people to fight the Egyptians? Why had God trapped the Israelites between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea?**
God had some big plans. He wanted them to depend on Him. These people had been slaves not soldiers. The Egyptians were too strong for them. Their only chance of deliverance came from God. They would see their deliverance.
4. **What did God say to Moses? Why is that significant? What action did God want Moses to take?**
God wanted Moses to stop crying out to him and to act. He wanted him to stretch out his arm and lead the people across the seabed.
5. **How did God use the fiery cloud? Why was this significant?**
The fiery cloud stood between the army of pharaoh and the Israelites to separate the two. The pillar of cloud also moved between the Egyptians and the Israelites. The cloud brought darkness to the Egyptians but light to the Israelites. It was another sign that God was indeed in control and wanting to save the Israelites.
6. **What were the consequences of Moses' stretching out his arm? What do you think about Moses' faith in God? Would you have liked to be there among the Israelites?**
The wind blew the waters apart, so the people could walk on the seabed. Moses knew God and trusted Him. It would have been great to be there and seen the water parting - but we have the advantage of knowing how the story ended. The Israelites were probably still scared.
7. **Do you think the people gained as much faith as Moses after the destruction of the Egyptian army? Do you think they would be more fearful?**
I think both. (Answers vary)
8. **What lesson is in this story for us today?**
(Answers vary- but trust God: He has a pla

Hagar Flees Sarah

Genesis 16:1-15; 21:8-20

Background: Hagar in the Desert

The northern region of the Sinai Peninsula is a sandy plain with high sand dunes, a few wells, scrubby shrubs, wadis (channels that fill with water seasonally from rains or snow melt), a few wells and by them, some palm oases. The plain was hot and dry in summer, with winds from the north. In spring and fall it had dry southern winds and occasional rain. The nights were cool. It was populated with quail, partridges, and grouse; hares, hedgehogs and moles; falcons and eagles; sand foxes, jackals, leopards, and wildcats; and gazelles and ibex.

There was a route that ran along the northern coastline of this plain. Most believe this route was called "way of the land of the Philistines" and as "the way of Horus. It would have run from well to well. It is believed to have been an Egyptian military and trade route. There were sparse settlements along it and probably some Egyptian fortifications, for Egypt controlled the Sinai Peninsula at the time. The sea breezes would have given this northern route some relief from the heat. But this route led into northern areas of Egypt that were swampy.

The Bible usually mentions a more southern route, called "the way to Shur". It ran across the southern edge of the sandy plain. It was bordered on the south by a limestone plateau with cliffs with ridges, mountains and valleys. Seasonal snow melt from the mountains would have fed some wadis. This route would also have run from oases to oases. It ran from Beersheba in the Negev, to the lakes north of the Gulf of Suez, a distance of ~120 km. Abram and Sarai travelled to and from Egypt via this route (Gen. 13:3).

While in Egypt Abraham acquired slaves. Hagar, an Egyptian slave, was probably one of them. When Hagar fled from Sarai, she apparently was going back to Egypt, for the angel found her by the way to Shur (Gen. 16:7).

The Bible says that Hagar ran from Sarai. We assume, then, that she ran without doing much preparation for her journey. As a slave, it is unlikely she had money or resources to help her along her way. There is no mention that she took a camel or a donkey for transportation, or that she joined up with a caravan. So, it could well be that she was walking alone and pregnant along that desert road. She would have no shade from the sun, and the distance from oases to oases would have been further than the amount of water she could carry. She probably would have been in a

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression

3.1 Hagar Flees Sarah

desperate situation when the angel of the Lord found her near that spring. Therefore, she named the spring of water, Beer-lahai-roi, which means "the well of the Living One who sees me".

Questions

True or False

1. Hagar was Sarah's best friend. F
2. Sarah wanted to have a baby T
3. Hagar behaved differently when she became pregnant T
4. God tells Hagar to run away to Egypt. F
5. Hagar believed that it was dangerous to see God. T
6. Sarah did not want Ishmael to keep his place in the family. T
7. Abraham sends Hagar and Isaac away. F
8. Hagar and Ishmael died in the desert. F

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

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <u>f</u> 1. multitude | a. an animal related to a horse |
| <u>g</u> 2. slave | b. to gain possessions from a relative |
| <u>e</u> 3. harshly | c. to feed a baby from the breast |
| <u>h</u> 4. a spring | d. impossibly |
| <u>a</u> 5. donkey | e. cruelly |
| <u>d</u> 6. miraculously | f. very many |
| <u>c</u> 7. to nurse | g. a person owned by someone |
| <u>b</u> 8. inherit | h. where water comes out of the ground |

Fill in the blanks with the words above.

1. Abraham's name means father of a multitude.
2. Hagar was hateful to Sarai, even though Hagar was only a slave, so Sarai treated her harshly.

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3.1 Hagar Flees Sarah

3. Hagar ran away and stopped beside ___a spring___.
4. God said that Ishmael would be like a wild ___donkey___ .
5. Sarah ___miraculously___ had Isaac when she was very old, and Abraham gave a feast when she did not ___nurse___ her son anymore.
6. Sarah did not want Ishmael to ___inherit___ anything from Abraham.

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 Sarai give her maid to her husband?
She wanted Abraham to have an heir and didn't believe that she could have children.
2. How did Hagar feel when she became pregnant? How did Sarai feel?
Hagar felt she was better than her mistress because having children was a status symbol. Sarai would feel very low.
3. What did Abraham tell his wife about how to solve this problem?
He said she could do what she liked.
4. Who found Hagar near the spring? What did he say to her?
The angel of the Lord found her and said, "Where have you come from, and where are you going?"
5. What did God promise Hagar?
That she would have a son and later have "so many descendants that no one will be able to count them all". But her son would be like a wild donkey, fighting everyone and everyone fighting him.
6. What did Hagar call God?
"The God Who Sees Me"
7. Do Sarah and Hagar become friends after the birth of their children?
No. Apparently their bad relationship continued.
8. Are God's words to Abraham the same as what God had already told Hagar?
Yes, He promised both that Ishmael would become a great nation.

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression

3.1 Hagar Flees Sarah

9. Do you think that what Abraham did was cruel to Hagar and Ishmael? Why?
Answers vary. He sent them off alone into the desert, which was cruel, but he gave them some food and water - though very little. Perhaps he believed they would survive because of his faith in God's promise.
10. How did God rescue Hagar and Ishmael?
He revealed the well not far from where Hagar stopped.

- *Intermediate*

1. Why did Sarai give her slave to her husband? Do you think this was a good idea?
She wanted Abraham to have an heir and didn't believe that she could have children. No, because Sarai wasn't believing in God's promise.
2. How did Hagar feel when she became pregnant? How did Sarai feel? Why did they have these reactions?
Their positions reversed because of the status that childbearing brought to a woman of that culture.
3. What did Abraham tell his wife about how to solve this problem? Do you think Abraham did the right thing?
He said she could do what she liked. It sounded like he was fed up and wanted Sarai to solve her own problem. It would have been better if he had taken the time to talk to her and reassure her.
4. Who found Hagar near the spring? What did he say to her? Why is this important?
The angel of the Lord found her and said, "Where have you come from, and where are you going?". The Lord wanted her to go back. Ishmael needed a safe place to be born and God made a promise about Ishmael's future.
5. What did God promise Hagar?
That she would have a son and later have "so many descendants that no one will be able to count them all". But her son would be a wild man and hostile to his relatives and others.
6. What did Hagar call God? Why is this name meaningful? Do you think it also has significance to us today?
Hagar called God "The God Who Sees Me". He knows when we are in trouble. He watches us all the time.

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression

3.1 Hagar Flees Sarah

7. Do Sarah and Hagar become friends after the birth of their children? Explain why you think not.
They were rivals through their sons, which is why Sarah wanted to get rid of both Hagar and Ishmael.
8. How do God's words to Abraham echo what God had already told Hagar? God told both that Ishmael would have many descendants and become a great nation. He reveals the future of Ishmael to both, not forgetting that Ishmael is also the son of Abraham.
9. Do you think that what Abraham did was cruel to Hagar and Ishmael? Why? Answers vary. He sent them out into the desert with little food or water and no protection. However, he believed what God had said so he knew Ishmael wouldn't die.
10. How did God rescue Hagar and Ishmael? What does this tell you about the character of God?
God doesn't forget and was still watching over Ishmael and Hagar.

- *Challenging*

1. Why did Sara give her maid to her husband? How do you think she expected things to turn out? Was this a wise decision?
She wanted Abraham to have an heir and didn't believe that she could have children. In the culture of the day, this was acceptable, and the child would be seen as her child (with Hagar as a surrogate mother). Proverbs 2:6-8 says that all wisdom comes from God, but Sarah wasn't believing in God's promise.
2. How did Hagar feel when she became pregnant? Why did Sara blame Abram? Why did they have these reactions?
Hagar felt herself to be superior to Sara. Sara wasn't willing to admit that she had brought this situation about and so blamed Abram. Their positions reversed because of the status that childbearing brought to a woman of that culture.
3. What did Abram tell his wife about how to solve this problem? What does this tell you about Abram? About God's choice of Abram and Sarai to be the founding couple of His people?
He said she could do what she liked. It sounded like he was fed up and wanted Sarai to solve her own problem. But he could have said no to Sarai's

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression

3.1 Hagar Flees Sarah

plan and so was neglecting his own fault in the predicament. As Sarai's husband it would have been better if he had taken the time to talk to her and reassure her. God chose them knowing their shortcomings. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 says of the early Christians, "Not many of you were wise by human standards ... But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise ...so that no one may boast before him."

4. Who found Hagar near the spring? Why does he tell her to go back and be Sarai's slave? He tells her not only to return but gives her promises as well. What does this show you about God?

The angel of the Lord found her and said, "Where have you come from, and where are you going?". Hagar had felt herself superior to Sarai, the angel reminds her of her real position. The Lord wanted her to go back. Ishmael needed a safe place to be born and God made a promise about Ishmael's future. This shows that God was not demanding blind obedience from Hagar, but was tender-hearted with her, encouraging her with His promises.

5. What did God promise Hagar? What did He say her son would be like? Why do you think God named her child?

God said her descendants would be too numerous to count. He said that her son would be the father of many but that he would be a wild man and hostile to his brethren. By naming the child Himself, He showed Hagar that He would take care of him.

6. What did Hagar call God? Why is this name meaningful? Do you think it also has significance to us today?

Hagar called God "The One who sees". He knows when we are in trouble. He watches us all the time.

7. Do Sarah and Hagar could become friends after the birth of their children? Explain why you think not. There's a proverb, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree." How do you see that truth in this story?

No, people can't change that quickly. And they were rivals through their sons. Hagar had despised Sarai, and Ishmael would fulfill the angel's prophecy by fighting Isaac's descendants.

8. How does God's words to Abraham echo what God had already told Hagar? What did He tell Abram to do?

He reveals the future of Ishmael to both, not forgetting that Ishmael is also the son of Abraham. God told Abraham to do whatever Sarah wanted.

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression

3.1 Hagar Flees Sarah

9. Do you think what Abraham did was cruel to Hagar and Ishmael? Why had God let Sarai give such a harsh sentence?

Answers vary. He sent them out into the desert with little food or water and no protection. However, he believed what God had said so he knew Ishmael wouldn't die. God gives us freedom to sin. This showed us that Sarai could be cruel, yet God did not break His promise to her, nor to Hagar.

10. How did God rescue Hagar and Ishmael? Do you think Hagar trusted God to take care of them when she set out? What does this tell you about the character of God?

God doesn't forget and was still watching over Ishmael and Hagar. She doesn't appear to have trusted God, because she gave up all hope when they ran out of water. But when she gave up, God came to her, talked with her personally, provided water, and reiterated His promise to her.

David Flees Saul (Part 1)

1 Samuel:8-20

Background: The Sea Peoples

The term *Sea Peoples* is used to describe a loose confederation of aggressive, seafaring, migrants from regions around the eastern Mediterranean - Crete and the islands of the Aegean Sea, south eastern Europe, Sicily, and Sardinia. They were an advanced people, with bronze armor and weaponry, horses and chariots. They brought their families with them in their warships. They looked for coastlines to conquer and colonize in Libya, Turkey, Syria, Canaan, Cyprus, and Egypt.

Not a lot is known about these people, but history records such a tradition of maritime conquest in the records of King Minos of Crete (1720-1628 B.C.). Minos is described as having a strong navy. They conquered the Asian maritime pirates of the day, and the Minoans took control of and colonized the islands of the Aegean Sea.

Ancient Egyptian pharaohs record dealings with the Sea Peoples in the 14th century BC. (after King Minos' time). Pharaoh Merneptah records waging war against the Sea Peoples in 13th century BC. Later Ramses III, who also warred with them, describes the Sea Peoples as having desolated cities in Turkey, Syria, Cyprus, and Canaan.

Genesis uses the term Philistines to describe Sea Peoples who had come from Caphtor (Crete) and records them being already present along the coastline of Canaan in Abraham's day (somewhere between 2100-1900 BC) (before King Minos' time). In Genesis, Abraham visited Abimelech, king of the Philistines in the city of Gerar, the same region in which the Philistines of Samson's time lived, and the same region in which the Philistines of Saul and David's time lived.

Exodus describes the Philistines as formidable warriors, for God leads the Israelites not along the "way of (road to) the land of the Philistines," because an encounter with the Philistines would cause the Israelites to head back to Egypt.

The Philistines (Sea People) of Saul and David's day are also described as well-armed for battle, as seen in the description of Goliath's armor and weapons. That Philistine armor and weaponry was formidable when the Philistines demanded champion warfare against Goliath in the valley. But it would have slowed them down when they ran from the Israelites. The Philistines would not have had their chariots with them; chariots work well on flat, coastal plains, but would be useless in the rocky mountains of Canaan.

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression
3.2 David Flees Saul (Part 1)

Passage Questions

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

- a) ___4___ Goliath insulted Saul's army and challenged one of them to fight him.
- b) ___6___ David knocked Goliath down with his sling and cut off his head.
- c) ___5___ David offered to fight Goliath.
- d) ___1___ The people asked Samuel to give them a king.
- e) ___7___ The women of Israel sang songs to honour David more than Saul.
- f) ___2___ God chose Saul to be king, but Saul disobeyed God.
- g) ___8___ Saul tried to kill David.
- h) ___3___ God told Samuel to anoint the shepherd boy, David, as king.

Match the following words with their meanings.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| ___f___1. insult | a. laugh at disrespectfully |
| ___c___2. warrior | b. people afraid to do what they should do |
| ___b___3. cowards | c. soldier or fighter |
| ___h___4. anoint | d. move quickly out of the way |
| ___a___5. make fun of | e. a strap with a pocket in it used to throw a stone |
| ___g___6. dagger | f. show disrespect |
| ___e___7. sling | g. long knife |
| ___d___8. dodged | h. to choose someone to do something |

Use words from the list above to fill in these sentences.

1. Goliath was a huge ___warrior___, and he made the Israelites into ___cowards___ who were afraid to fight.
2. Goliath ___insulted___ the Israelite army and God, and he ___made fun of___ David also.
3. Goliath had a spear, a sword and a ___dagger___, but David had only a stick and a ___sling___.
4. Saul threw a spear at David, but David ___dodged___ it twice.

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression
3.2 David Flees Saul (Part 1)

5. Samuel poured oil on David's head to ___anoint___ him to become the next king.

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. What made Saul a good king in the beginning?

He was a warrior, and he led the Israelites in battle against the Philistines. He won many of those battles.

2. What made Saul a bad king? Why do you think he changed?

He disobeyed God after he won many battles. Perhaps he thought that he had won because of his power and not because of God.

3. Why was David a good choice for king?

He defended his sheep with his life. He was brave. He respected and trusted God.

4. Did God put David in King Saul's place right away? Why?

No. David was still too young. And God had much to teach him.

5. What was Goliath's challenge?

He challenged Israel to send out one representative to fight him and the winning side's army would take over all the land and people.

6. How did Saul respond to Goliath? How did David respond to Goliath? Why do you think they responded so differently?

Saul saw Goliath from an earthly perspective - Goliath was much stronger and much taller than Saul, so Saul believed Goliath would win. Saul was afraid. David was fearless and believed that God would give Israel the victory. David had God's Spirit in him, but the Spirit had departed from Saul.

7. What was Saul's first reaction when David killed Goliath? Why do you think Saul responded this way?

Saul was joyful in David's victory. David had rescued the Israelite army and Saul's reputation in the eyes of the Philistine. Because David was so young, Saul didn't see him as a threat at first.

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression
3.2 David Flees Saul (Part 1)

8. Why do you think Saul tried to kill David?

It was the song the women were singing - they were honouring David above Saul. Saul remembered that Samuel had told him that God had rejected him as king. He began to realize that David was likely the one who would replace him.

• *Intermediate*

1. *1Samuel 8: 5 - 8 says Israel's elders went to Samuel and said, "Now we want a king to be our leader, just like all the other nations. Choose one for us!"*
⁶ Samuel was upset to hear the leaders say they wanted a king, so he prayed about it. ⁷ The LORD answered, "Samuel, do everything they want you to do. I am really the one they have rejected as their king."

Why did the Israelites want a king? Was it good that they wanted a king?

They were afraid of the Philistines and wanted a king to lead their armies into battle. Samuel told them that God was their king, but they refused to listen to him. They trusted in having a king, like all the other nations, rather than trusting in God.

2. The Bible describes Saul as being the best looking and tallest man in Israel. Would this fit people's ideas about a king? In what ways was Saul a good king?

Yes, Saul looked very 'kingly'. He was the tallest and handsomest man in Israel - even today analysts say that taller men get more promotions at work, as do the handsome. But Saul was also brave, he was a good warrior and he did lead the armies into many victories. He also honoured God in the beginning.

3. Why did God reject Saul as king? Was God being unfair to Saul?

Saul was not carrying out what God asked of him through Samuel; rather he was doing what was right in his own eyes. When Samuel confronted him, Saul defied Samuel by justifying himself. Saul had previous warnings from Samuel that he had ignored. (Saul had offered the sacrifice to God before his army went into battle, even though only a priest should perform that duty.) And God saw other things in Saul as well - Saul later shows his dark side in his attempts to kill David, and his attempt to kill Jonathan. (Later Saul has all the priests of Nob, and their families and children killed for

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3.2 David Flees Saul (Part 1)

trying to tell Saul that David was a good man. And Saul consults the dark side when he has the witch of Endor summon Samuel's soul.

4. *In the Bible, we learn that God told Samuel to go and find the new king among the sons of Jesse. Jesse only brought seven of his sons to Samuel. Even though Samuel thought all seven would make good choices, God rejected all of them. Samuel then asked Jesse if he had another son, and then had to tell Jesse to bring David. How do you think David's brothers reacted to this?*

You would expect some resentment - being king of Israel was the greatest honour an Israelite could have. (It's not in this lesson, but the Bible says that Jesse sent David to Saul's camp to bring food to his three older brothers who were in Saul's army. One of the brothers accuses David of really having come so that he could enjoy watching the battle, and of having abandoned his few and "scrawny" sheep.)

5. **What personality traits did David have that made him a good choice for king?**

He took care of sheep and would attack bears and lions to defend them. The Bible says that if a bear or lion had grabbed a lamb, David would beat the animal until it let go of it. And that if the animal then turned on him, David would grab it and beat it to death. He was also zealous for God and trusted Him completely for victory. He saw Goliath through God's eyes.

6. **Why didn't God replace Saul with David as king right away?**

David was just a young teen somewhere between 11 and 13 at the time that Samuel anointed him. The Israelites would not have accepted him as king both because of his age and because they were loyal to Saul. Several times some Israelites betrayed David's whereabouts to Saul. (After Saul's death there was much division in Israel over David succeeding him as king.)

7. **Why would the Philistines have chosen the 'champion' method of warfare - when the fight between the two best warriors decides who wins the battle? Do you think they gave the Israelites any choice?**

The 'champion' type of warfare is often found in epic poetry and myths of ancient history (Wikipedia). The Philistines had superior weaponry, and a superior man - a literal giant who had trained as a soldier all his life. It doesn't appear that Saul was given any choice in the matter.

8. **Compare Saul's and David's response to Goliath. What explanation could there be for the differences between them?**

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3.2 David Flees Saul (Part 1)

Saul recoils in fear. He tries to find someone else in his army willing to take on Goliath. David sees Goliath's taunt of Israel's army as a taunt of Israel's God. So, David is confident that God will give victory in the battle. God's Spirit had left Saul, but it was on David.

9. What was Saul's first reaction when David killed Goliath? Why do you think Saul responded this way?

Saul was delighted that someone would kill Goliath, and even more so when the Philistines fled, and the Israelite army was able to run after them, kill them, and plunder them. This victory rescued Israel's army, Israel's land, and Saul's reputation as king. (The Philistines had taunted Saul as a weak leader, but now Saul's army had routed them.) He was delighted with David's bravery. There was still goodness in Saul, some of the way he had been before he began falling away from God.

10. What prompted Saul to try to kill David?

The Bible says that Saul became suspicious after hearing the song the women were singing - they were honouring David above Saul. And that Saul said to himself, "What more can he have than the kingdom". Saul would have remembered that Samuel had told him that God had rejected him as king.

- *Challenging*

1. *1 Samuel 8: 5 - 8 says Israel's elders went to Samuel and said, "Now we want a king to be our leader, just like all the other nations. Choose one for us!"⁶ Samuel was upset to hear the leaders say they wanted a king, so he prayed about it. ⁷ The LORD answered, "Samuel, do everything they want you to do. I am really the one they have rejected as their king." Were the Israelites right to demand a king? Explain your answer.*

They were afraid of the Philistines and wanted a king to lead their armies into battle. But this was not good, for Samuel told them that God was their king, but they refused to listen to him. The Bible says that God told Samuel that it was Him they were rejecting, not Samuel. They trusted in having a king, like all the other nations, rather than trusting in God.

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2. The Bible describes Saul as being the best looking and tallest man in Israel. Was Saul the kind of king that the Israelites wanted? Why or why not? Why does God give us what we want sometimes even when it doesn't honour Him?

Yes, Saul was the tallest and most handsome man in Israel - attributes that according to analysts today still bring promotion to men in various professions. Also, he was a good military leader. However, Saul had flaws that God could see. Romans 1:24-26 says that God gives us over to what we want when we persistently reject Him. Samuel warned them against having a king (1 Sam 8), but their joy was in their king, not God.

3. What did you learn about Saul in this part of the story? If you were an employer, would you have kept Saul or fired him?

Saul had a really dark side. Obviously, David was a righteous and courageous young man and Israel would benefit from him, but Saul saw only his own benefit being at risk. Saul could have consulted Samuel about how to transition from his kingship to David's, but he chose not to. Saul did not have a thought for honouring God or serving his people. He even sought to kill his own son for defending David.

4. *In the Bible, we learn that God told Samuel to go and find the new king among the sons of Jesse. Jesse only brought seven of his sons to Samuel. Even though Samuel thought all seven would make good choices, God rejected all of them. Samuel then asked Jesse if he had another son, and then had to tell Jesse to bring David. The Bible records one of David's older brothers despising him and bringing accusations against him. Why do you think the brother did this?*

The brother resented having been passed over by God for the coveted position of king of Israel, and it being given to his youngest brother instead.

5. What personality traits did David have that would make him a good choice for king? Do you think Samuel was able to see this? Why was Samuel able to discern God's will?

David literally risked his life by attacking lions and bears to rescue his sheep. He put the welfare of his father's sheep above his own. He was humble too. Even though Samuel had anointed him king, he did not challenge Saul for the position, or show any lack of respect for Saul - rather he honoured Saul. The Bible says that Samuel thought each of the older

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brothers would be God's choice for king because each was impressive in their outward appearance. So, no, Samuel couldn't tell that it was David, until God told him. But Samuel did know to look to God's choice, not his own wisdom. Samuel had faithfully served God as a prophet all his life and so had learned to discern God's will.

6. Why didn't God replace King Saul with David right away?

David was just a young teen somewhere between 11 and 13 at the time that Samuel anointed him. The Israelites would not have accepted him as king both because of his age and because they were loyal to Saul. Several times some Israelites betrayed David's whereabouts to Saul. (After Saul's death there was much division in Israel over David succeeding him as king.)

7. Why would the Philistines have chosen the 'champion' method of warfare - when the fight between the two best warriors decides who wins the battle? Do you think they gave the Israelites any choice? Do you think this is a good way of doing battle?

In champion warfare, the outcome of a war is determined by a single combat between one representative from both armies. This type of warfare is often found in epic poetry and myths of ancient history (Wikipedia). The Philistines had superior weaponry, and a superior man - a literal giant who had trained as a soldier all his life. It doesn't appear that Saul was given any choice in the matter. This way of battle has not been used since ancient times, so it must not have been a successful strategy.

8. Why were Saul and David so different in their response to Goliath?

God's Spirit was on David, but it had departed from Saul. David faithful in how he defended his sheep from bears and lions, and he was zealous for God when Goliath was taunting. Saul, even when God's Spirit was still with him, showed self-will and a lack of honour for God.

9. What was Saul's first reaction when David killed Goliath? Why do you think Saul responded this way?

Saul was delighted that someone would kill Goliath, and even more so when the Philistines fled, and the Israelite army was able to run after them, kill them, and plunder them. This victory rescued Israel's army, Israel's land, and Saul's reputation as king. (The Philistines had taunted Saul as a weak leader, but now Saul's army had routed them.) He was delighted with David's bravery. There was still goodness in Saul, some of the way he had been before he began falling away from God.

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3.2 David Flees Saul (Part 1)

10. What motivated Saul to try to kill David? Do you think they will be able to become reconciled? Why or why not?

The Bible says that Saul became suspicious after hearing the song the women were singing - they were honouring David above Saul. And that Saul said to himself, "what more can he have than the kingdom". Saul would have remembered that Samuel had told him that God had rejected him as king. Saul could have consulted Samuel, but he didn't. Saul has put himself first in such a continuous pattern that his mind and heart are irreversible at this point. And David has practiced honouring God and leading a righteous life for so long, that he is not willing to compromise with Saul by honouring him above God.

David Flees Saul (Part 2)

1 Samuel:21-30

Background: David's four years of being chased by Saul

1. After Michal helped him escape, David sought refuge with Samuel at Ramah, but Saul came after him
2. He returned to Gibeah, stayed hidden and saw Jonathan, and learned Saul really does intend to kill him
3. David seeks supplies from the priests at Nob. There Doeg the Edomite, a chief of the herdsmen who belonged to Saul, betrays David.
4. David goes to Gath to seek refuge in the Land of the Philistines with the king of Gath, but the people remember his exploits with Goliath, and he has to escape
5. David hides in the caves at Adullam in the hills of Judah. Here his family joins him. About 400 men joined David there - these men were distressed, in debt, and discontented with Saul. David became their captain.
6. David went to Mizpah in Moab to find a place for his parents to live in safety. The prophet Gad tells David to return to Judah
7. David goes to live in the forest of Hereth. Abiathar the only priest of Nob who was able to escape Saul's slaughter joins David.
8. David and his men save the city of Keilah from the Philistines, but Abiathar warns him that the people of Keilah intend to betray him to Saul.
9. David flees to the Wilderness of Ziph. Jonathan finds him and encourages him. Jonathan tells him that he will be king over Israel, and Jonathan will serve him. Then the Ziphites betrayed David's whereabouts to Saul.
10. David goes to the Wilderness of Maon. The Ziphites direct Saul there and he is closing in on David when a messenger comes to tell Saul that the Philistines have invaded again, and he and the army have to leave. David builds a memorial there called the Rock of Escape.
11. David goes to the Wilderness of En Gedi and hides in the caves there. Saul chases him with an army. Saul goes to the bathroom in the very cave where David is hiding. David refuses to kill him though his men think this is God's will. David cuts a piece out of Saul's cloak, then when Saul leaves, David calls to him to show him how he had spared his life. Saul is moved by David's mercy to him, admits that David will be the next king, and leaves. But David knows that Saul is unstable and does not go with him.
12. Samuel dies. David goes to the Wilderness of Paran. There he and his men keep robbers from stealing sheep from a man in Maon, named Nabal. But

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when he asks Nabal for food for his men, Nabal refuses. Nabal's wife Abigail intervenes. Nabal dies. And David takes in Abigail as a wife.

13. David returns to the Wilderness of Ziph and hides in the hills of Hachilah. Again, the Ziphites tell Saul where he is. At night when Saul and his army are sleeping, David and one of his men steal down. David again refuses to kill Saul. He says the Lord will strike Saul. David takes the spear and jug of water that were by Saul's head. Then he returns to the top of a hill far away and calls out to Saul's camp. He chides Abner, the leader of Saul's army for having not protected Saul. David calls out to Saul for peace. Saul apologizes, admits he sinned, and blesses David and says that David will prevail. Saul invites David to return, but David leaves instead.
14. David returns to the Gath in the land of the Philistines. This time, the leader there, against advice, gives David and his men shelter in a neighboring city of Ziklag. The Philistine king assumed David and his men were enemies of Saul and would raid Israelite cities for him. David and his men do raid cities - but they are non-Israelite cities far away. David stays there for four years until Saul's death.

After David was hiding in the hills of Adullam, he wrote Psalm 57. He wrote, "I run to you for safety. In the shadow of your wings, I seek protection...You are faithful, and you can be trusted...Your love reaches higher than the heavens; your loyalty extends beyond the clouds. May you, my God, be honored above the heavens; may your glory be seen everywhere on earth."

David was in the Forest of Hereth when he heard that Saul had the priests of Nob killed. David wrote in Psalm 52, "But I am like an olive tree growing in God's house, and I can count on his love forever and ever. I will always thank God for what he has done; I will praise his good name when his people meet."

After the Ziphites betrayed his whereabouts to Saul, David wrote, "I will bring a gift and offer a sacrifice to you, Lord. I will praise your name because you are good. You have rescued me from all my troubles."

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Passage Questions

Change these False statements to True:

1. King Saul was happy that David won many victories. King Saul was jealous of David for winning many victories.
2. Everyone in Saul's family hated David. Saul's son Jonathan was David's good friend.
3. Saul listened to his son Jonathan. Saul did not listen to his son Jonathan but tried to kill him instead.
4. David joined Saul for the New Moon festival dinner. David hid in a field for the New Moon festival dinner.
5. Jonathan told David that if the arrow was close, he was in danger. Jonathan told David that if the arrow went far, he was in danger.
6. David was happy when Saul was killed. David mourned when Saul and his sons were killed.
7. David tried to kill Saul twice. David refused to kill Saul twice.

Match the following words with their meanings

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| __c__ 1. rejected | a. hurt |
| __h__ 2. traitor | b. fleeing |
| __e__ 3. jealous | c. not accept |
| __a__ 4. harm | d. promise |
| __f__ 5. loyal | e. angry that someone has what you want |
| __b__ 6. on the run | f. faithful |
| __d__ 7. swear | g. was deeply sad at losing someone or something |
| __g__ 8. mourned | h. a person who betrays friends or his country by helping their enemies. |

Use the words above to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

1. God ___rejected___ Saul as Israel's king.

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3.3 David Flees Saul (Part 2)

2. Saul was ___jealous___ of David's victories, and David was afraid Saul would ___harm___ him.
3. Jonathan was a ___loyal___ friend to David, and he said " I ___swear___ by the LORD God to help you".
4. Saul thought Jonathan was plotting with David against him. He told him that he was a ___traitor___.
5. David was ___on the run___ for many years in the wilderness.
6. When Saul and his sons died in battle, David ___mourned___ for them.

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 Jonathan? What was his relationship to David?
Jonathan was one of Saul's sons. He was David's close friend and he was committed to David. (The Bible says that he gave David his own clothes and armor - those of a crown prince.)
2. What did David ask Jonathan to do to see what Saul's intentions were?
He asked him to tell Saul that he had to be absent from the New Moon festival because his family wanted him to go home for an annual sacrifice. David said that if Saul became angry at this excuse, that would indicate that he meant to harm David.
3. How did Saul respond to Jonathan's excuse for David's absence?
Saul went into a rage. He accused Jonathan of being a traitor - that meant Saul thought Jonathan was helping David plot against him. He told Jonathan that his own mother should be ashamed of giving birth to him - intimating that Saul's wife had slept around and Jonathan was actually not his son. He threw a spear at Jonathan, trying to kill him as just payment for his disloyalty. He demanded that Jonathan bring David to him so he could be killed.
4. What was Jonathan's plan to tell David whether Saul intended to kill him?
Jonathan would bring a servant boy to the field on the third morning after the New Moon festival dinner. He would shoot arrows at a target to the

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side of the rock where David was hiding. The boy would run to get the arrows. If Jonathan told the boy that the arrows were closer, then David knew he was safe (and he could come out from hiding). If Jonathan told the boy the arrows were further, David would know that Saul was seeking to kill him (and he should flee).

5. **Why did Jonathan say to the boy, "Hurry! And don't stop running"?**
He was telling David that the situation was critical, and that David had to flee quickly and keep fleeing quickly from Saul.
6. **Why did David come out from hiding, instead of leaving immediately?**
He wanted to say goodbye to Jonathan. He was committed to his friend and put off his flight to have a chance to honour what Jonathan had meant to him.
7. **What does David's prayer show about why he refused to kill Saul?**
It shows that he believes God will bring trouble on Saul. He believed that God made Saul king and that it was God's role to remove Saul. That is why he refused to take vengeance himself. He trusted God to help him and protect him and give him justice.
8. **The Bible says that before Saul went to his final battle, he went to a witch in Endor and made her bring up Samuel's spirit from the dead. This was against God's law. What did this show about Saul?**
Saul had not sought Samuel's advice since the time that Samuel had told him that God had rejected him as king. So Saul must have been desperate. However, that he sought a witch and to bring back a spirit from the dead shows that Saul still had no fear of God.
9. **What would David's life have been like all those years that Saul hunted him?**
He would have been always on the move, and always fearful for his life, never knowing who would betray him. He lived in the desert for some time where there would be little access to water, and food would be in short supply. There was little physical comfort for him.
10. **Why do you think that God made David live such a hard life for so many years?**
David learned to trust God for everything during that time. Hard times can strengthen faith, and this happened for David. (Sadly, David got into

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trouble with Bathsheba after he was king and living an easy life at the palace.)

11. Why did David take care of Jonathan's son?

David had promised Jonathan that he would take care of his family. David had loved Jonathan and was committed to doing good for this great friend.

• *Intermediate*

1. How did David ask Jonathan to test Saul's intentions?

David asked Jonathan to tell Saul that he had to be absent from the New Moon festival because his family wanted him to go home for an annual sacrifice, and so he had pleaded with Jonathan to go. David said that if Saul became angry at this excuse, that would indicate that he meant to harm David.

2. What was Saul's response to Jonathan's excuse for David's absence? What does this show you about Saul?

Saul went into a rage. He accused Jonathan of being a traitor - that meant Saul thought Jonathan was helping David plot against him. He told Jonathan that his own mother should be ashamed of giving birth to him - intimating that Saul's wife had slept around and Jonathan was actually not his son. He threw a spear at Jonathan, trying to kill him as just payment for his disloyalty. He demanded that Jonathan bring David to him, so he could be killed. This showed that Saul was losing his ability to reason; he was becoming more and more paranoid - and hateful.

3. What was Jonathan's plan to let David know Saul's intentions? Why was this a wise plan?

Jonathan would bring a servant boy to the field on the third morning after the New Moon festival dinner. He would shoot arrows at a target to the side of the rock where David was hiding. The boy would run to get the arrows. If Jonathan told the boy that the arrows were closer, then David knew he was safe (and he could come out from hiding). If Jonathan told the boy the arrows were further, David would know that Saul was seeking to kill him (and he should flee).

This was a good plan because it kept David hidden the whole time the boy was there. David could also have run immediately, rather than taking a chance by coming out to say goodbye.

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4. Why did Jonathan say to the boy, "Hurry! And don't stop running"? What was he expecting David to do?

He was telling David that the situation was critical, and that David had to flee quickly and keep fleeing quickly from Saul. He must have expected that David would come out to say goodbye once the boy was gone, because he sent the boy home but he himself stayed in the field.

5. Why did David come out from hiding, instead of leaving immediately? What did the two say to each other?

He wanted to say goodbye to Jonathan. He was committed to his friend and put off his flight to have a chance to honour what Jonathan had meant to him. They both reaffirmed their commitment to each other and promised to take care of each others' families. The Bible doesn't record everything they said.

6. The Israelites remained loyal to Saul after David fled. Why do you think that happened?

They may have done this because they genuinely believed that Saul was still a good king worthy of loyalty. Or they may have believed that Saul would stay king and wanted to ingratiate themselves with him. They did not know the true story of what was going on.

7. Why did David not kill Saul when he had the chance?

David didn't try to kill Saul because he still honoured Saul as the one God had made king. Psalm 57 shows that David trusted God to carry out judgment on Saul. He knew it was not his decision to decide whether Saul's life still had any value. (Both times when he had the chance to kill him, David called to Saul afterwards and pleaded with him to change his mind. But though Saul repented both times, David was discerning enough to keep on the run from him.)

8. The Bible says that Jonathan was fearless and a great leader of men. It also says that Jonathan was willing for David to be king, rather than himself. What do you think of this?

Jonathan was a marvellous person. Here we see how humble he was, and loving, and accepting of God's will. He put God's will, and his friend David, above his own profit. He was the crown prince, but now he would be only a commander in the future King David's army. He was like John the Baptist who said he must decrease as Jesus increased.

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3.3 David Flees Saul (Part 2)

9. **What do you think David's life was like the four years Saul hunted for him?**
David would have been always on the move, and always fearful for his life, never knowing who would betray him. He lived in the desert for some time where there would be little access to water, and food would be in short supply. There was little physical comfort for him.
10. **Why do you think that God allowed David to live such a hard life for so many years?**
David learned to trust God for everything during that time. Hard times can strengthen faith, and this happened for David. (Sadly, David got into trouble with Bathsheba after he was king and living an easy life at the palace.)
11. **The Bible says that before Saul went to his final battle, he went to a witch in Endor and made her bring up Samuel's spirit from the dead, which was against God's law. What did this show about Saul?**
Saul had not sought Samuel's advice since the time that Samuel had told him that God had rejected him as king. So Saul must have been desperate. However, that he sought a witch and to bring back a spirit from the dead shows that Saul still had no fear of God.
12. **Samuel's spirit did talk to Saul, and told him that he and his sons, and the Israelite army would fall in battle the next day. Why did Saul still lead the army into battle?**
Perhaps he still didn't believe what Samuel had to say and thought that Samuel's prophecy would not come true. That he led the army into battle despite Samuel's words, shows his indifference to their welfare. He could have repented at Samuel's words; the town of Ninevah had repented when Jonah told them God would destroy them.
13. **David took care of Jonathan's son. Why did he do this?**
David was still committed to their welfare. He had promised Jonathan that he would take care of his family.

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3.3 David Flees Saul (Part 2)

- *Challenging*

1. The Bible says that Jonathan was fearless and a great leader of men. It also says that Jonathan was willing for David to be king, rather than himself. It also shows that Jonathan had a sense that he might die. Why do you think Jonathan was an immediate friend to David?

You can see Jonathan's humbleness when he gave David his own (crown prince) clothes and armor. He also risks his father's wrath to defend David. And he cries when David must leave. He may have had a sense he would die when he asks David to look after his family. Jonathan was like David in that he was also courageous and humble and not self-seeking.

2. How did David ask Jonathan to test Saul's intentions? How could David be sure this would work?

David asked Jonathan to tell Saul that he had to be absent from the New Moon festival because his family wanted him to go home for an annual sacrifice, and so he had pleaded with Jonathan to go. David said that if Saul became angry at this excuse, that would indicate that he meant to harm David. David must have discerned how Saul would react and what this reaction would mean. He had lived with Saul and so knew him well, and God would have given him discernment.

3. What was Jonathan's plan to let David know the result? What were the advantages of this plan?

Jonathan would bring a servant boy to the field on the third morning after the New Moon festival dinner. He would shoot arrows at a target to the side of the rock where David was hiding. The boy would run to get the arrows. If Jonathan told the boy that the arrows were closer, then David knew he was safe (and he could come out from hiding). If Jonathan told the boy the arrows were further, David would know that Saul was seeking to kill him (and he should flee).

This plan kept David hidden the whole time the boy was there. David could also have run immediately, rather than taking a chance by coming out to say goodbye.

4. What was Saul's response to Jonathan's excuse for David's absence? How did Jonathan respond to Saul's reaction? What does this show you about Jonathan?

Saul went into a rage. He accused Jonathan of being a traitor - that meant Saul thought Jonathan was helping David plot against him. He told Jonathan

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that his own mother should be ashamed of giving birth to him - intimating that Saul's wife had slept around and Jonathan was actually not his son. He threw a spear at Jonathan, trying to kill him as just payment for his disloyalty. He demanded that Jonathan bring David to him, so he could be killed. And Saul told Jonathan that he would not become king if David were alive.

Jonathan remains loyal to David, despite the break with his father this caused, and despite the fact that he knows that he will lose the throne to David. Jonathan also continues to be a son to his father; he doesn't desert him and so cause him public shame. He goes with him into battle, despite knowing this could cause his death.

5. **Why did Jonathan say to the boy, "Hurry! And don't stop running"? What was he expecting David to do?**

He was telling David that the situation was critical, and that David had to flee quickly and keep fleeing quickly from Saul. He must have expected that David would come out to say goodbye once the boy was gone, because he sent the boy home but he himself stayed in the field.

6. **Why did David come out from hiding, instead of leaving immediately? What did the two say to each other?**

He wanted to say goodbye to Jonathan. He was committed to his friend and put off his flight to have a chance to honour what Jonathan had meant to him. They both reaffirmed their commitment to each other and promised to take care of each other's families. The Bible doesn't record everything they said.

7. **The Israelites mostly remained loyal to Saul after David fled. Why do you think that was?**

They may have done this because they genuinely believed that Saul was still a good king worthy of loyalty. Or they may have believed that Saul would stay king and wanted to ingratiate themselves with him. They did not know the true story of what was going on.

8. **Why did David not kill Saul when he had the chance?**

David didn't try to kill Saul because he still honoured Saul as the one God had made king. Psalm 57 shows that David trusted God to carry out judgment on Saul. (Both times when he had the chance to kill him, David called to Saul afterwards and pleaded with him to change his mind. But

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though Saul repented both times, David was discerning enough to keep on the run from him.)

9. What would it have been like for David to flee from Saul for four years?

David did not grumble against God the entire time. Why not?

David would have been always on the move, and always fearful for his life, never knowing who would betray him. He lived in the desert for some time where there would be little access to water, and food would be in short supply. There was little physical comfort for him. David knew God very well and trusted Him despite his circumstances and suffering and probably confusion.

10. The Bible says that before Saul went to his final battle, he went to a witch in Endor and made her bring up Samuel's spirit from the dead, which was against God's law. What did this show about Saul?

Saul had not sought Samuel's advice since the time that Samuel had told him that God had rejected him as king. So, Saul must have been desperate. However, that he sought a witch and to bring back a spirit from the dead shows that Saul still had no fear of God.

11. Samuel's spirit did talk to Saul, and told him that he and his sons, and the Israelite army would fall in battle the next day.

- a. In Jesus' parable of Lazarus and the beggar, the rich man says of his brothers, "If someone came back to them from the dead, they would change their ways." Abraham replies, "If they won't listen to Moses and the Prophets, they're not going to be convinced by someone who rises from the dead." How does this apply to Saul?

Saul had not listened to Samuel when he was alive, and he still won't listen to him when he's dead. He leads his army into battle despite what Samuel said. When Jonah told the terrible Ninevites that God would destroy them, they repented.

- b. When David's family heard of the difficult situation he was in, they joined him in hiding. But back when Jesse sent David to bring food to his three older brothers who were serving in Saul's army in the time when Goliath was taunting them, David's oldest brother (and perhaps the others as well) disdained his righteous anger at Goliath. The oldest had accused him of being a poor shepherd, and of abandoning the care of his father's sheep to be a voyeur of the battle. What had changed them?

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression

3.3 David Flees Saul (Part 2)

They must have had enough character to have seen that God was with David and that they were in the wrong. Jesse was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth and godly teaching must have been passed on. They remembered love for their brother when he was in difficulty. Also, they were now fugitives of Saul as well, for Saul may well have killed them in his paranoia.

Onesimus Flees his Owner

Philemon 1:10-21

Background: slavery in the Roman Empire

The number of slaves in the Roman Empire is estimated to have been 15-25% of its population. As was the custom in ancient cultures, most slaves were captives from wars with enemies. Rome obtained most of its slaves from its wars of empire expansion.

Slaves were also provided by pirates selling captured sailors. Poor families would sell their children into slavery. Abandoned children were sold into slavery. There were local slave markets that were present in most large towns. These markets were run by slave traders, who hung signs on the slaves advertising their attributes. These traders could also buy slaves from other countries that practiced slavery.

Slaves were used in agriculture, mining, manufacturing, transportation, education, the military, accounting, construction, and private households.

Slavery was an accepted part of Roman life. Freedom was seen as a select privilege.

If a slave was paid for their work, they could save their money to buy their freedom. An owner could also free a slave. They could then work in the same job, but this time as a Roman plebeian (common low-class worker).

Slaves had no rights. They could not marry, nor have legitimate families. They could be rented out or traded. They could be overworked, whipped, branded, or killed for any reason. If a slave were to attack his owner, the other slaves were bound by Roman law to attack the attacker or face the death penalty.

Because Roman slaves were often prisoners of war from nearby countries, they were from the same people groups as the Romans, so looked the same as Romans. The Romans did not put distinguishing marks on slaves or make them dress in any distinguishing way. This was to keep the slaves from recognizing how much of the population they were. This helped protect against slave uprising, but it also made things easy for a slave to run away, and disappear into Roman society, as Onesimus did. Such a runaway slave might steal from his owner beforehand to finance his flight to far away parts of the empire.

Slaves could defy their owners by finding ways of frustrating and annoying them. They could steal, set fires, work very slowly, injure the animals they worked with, and destroy equipment.

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression

3.4 Onesimus flees his Owner

There were a few slave uprisings. In 73-71 BC, the gladiator Spartacus, a Thracian who had served in the Roman army, led an uprising of between 70,000 and 120,000 slaves. They defeated two Roman armies. When Spartacus' army was defeated, the Romans crucified 6,000 of the slaves to send a message to their labour force.

There is not much information on how slavery in the Roman Empire ended. It is thought that the economic and political changes when the Empire fell disrupted the infrastructure of slavery. The slaves became the serfs. Serfs did the same work as slaves but were not regarded as owned property. In return for the work they did for a landowner, they received a small plot of land on the estate, protection by the estate owner, and were entitled to justice under the law. The end of the feudal system is thought to have come from societal disruption caused by the Black Plague.

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Passage Questions

Match the sentence beginning to the correct ending:

- | | | |
|---------|---|---|
| ___c___ | 1. Philemon was a man who | a. ...was a runaway slave. |
| ___e___ | 2. Paul was a man who | b. ...because he was now a brother in Christ. |
| ___a___ | 3. Onesimus was a man who | c. ...had a lot of money and slaves . |
| ___f___ | 4. Paul was sad about sending Onesimus back | d. ...he owed him his life. |
| ___b___ | 5. Paul wanted Philemon to help Onesimus | e. ...was in jail because he followed Jesus. |
| ___g___ | 6. Paul asked Philemon to | f. ... because he was a good helper. |
| ___d___ | 7. Paul told Philemon that | g. ... welcome Onesimus the same way he would welcome Paul. |

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression
3.4 Onesimus flees his Owner

Match the following words with their meanings

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| ___f___1. cheated | a. a place to put people who break the law |
| ___e___2. slave | b. a slave who runs away from his owner |
| ___h___3. for good | c. strong and brutal |
| ___g___4. charge to | d. pay what was taken away |
| ___c___5. harsh | e. a person who is owned by someone else |
| ___b___6. runaway | f. to get something illegally or unfairly |
| ___d___7. pay back | g. cost/take from |
| ___a___8. jail | h. always |

Fill in the blanks with the words above.

1. Paul said that if Onesimus had ___cheated___ Philemon, then Philemon could ___charge___ it ___to___ his own account, and Paul would ___pay back___ the money.
2. Onesimus was the ___slave___ of Philemon.
3. Paul hoped that Philemon would get Onesimus back ___for good___.
4. ___Runaway___ slaves received ___harsh___ treatment.
5. Paul himself was in ___jail___.

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 were Paul and Philemon?

Paul and Philemon were friends. Paul was a Roman citizen and an apostle of the gospel. Philemon was a runaway slave; his owner was someone Paul knew.

2. Why did Paul write to Philemon? What did Onesimus do?

Paul wanted Philemon to know that Onesimus was now a brother and to know about what Onesimus had done for him. Paul wanted Philemon to free

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression

3.4 Onesimus flees his Owner

Onesimus and let him return to help Paul. Onesimus had run away from Philemon but was now returning to him.

3. **How did Onesimus change?**

Onesimus had been a runaway slave. He now was a mature Christian and part of Paul's ministry team.

4. **What favour did Paul ask of Philemon?**

Paul wanted Philemon to free Onesimus and let Onesimus return to Paul to help him in the work.

5. **What did Paul say about slaves and free people?**

He said that all were equal in Christ.

6. **Why did Paul say to Philemon that Onesimus was now much more than a slave? (What had changed in their relationship?)**

Onesimus was now a Christian, and a mature one who was useful to Paul in his work. Onesimus was now a brother, and since Paul said there was now no difference between a slave and his owner, Onesimus was now equal to Philemon.

7. **Why was Paul in jail?**

He was in jail for preaching the gospel.

8. **Why didn't Paul force Philemon to free Onesimus?**

He wanted Philemon to think through what Paul was telling him about Onesimus' worth, and Paul's teachings on the equality of all men. He wanted Philemon to make a free and good choice.

9. **Do you think Philemon did what Paul had asked?**

(Answers vary.) Possibly, because scholars believe Onesimus became the bishop of Ephesus.

• ***Intermediate***

1. **What was the relationship between Paul and Philemon?**

Paul and Philemon were friends and brothers in Christ. Philemon was helping Paul in his work.

2. **Why did Paul write to Philemon?**

Paul wanted Philemon to know that Onesimus was now a brother and to know about what Onesimus had done for him. Paul wanted Philemon to free

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression

3.4 Onesimus flees his Owner

Onesimus and let him return to help Paul. Onesimus had run away from Philemon but was now returning to him.

3. How had Onesimus changed? What was he like now?

Once Onesimus was a runaway slave but now he was a mature Christian and had been a great help to Paul while Paul was imprisoned. He was part of Paul's ministry team.

4. What favour did Paul ask of Philemon? What argument did he use?

He asked Philemon to free Onesimus. He argued that as a Christian, Onesimus was a brother in Christ.

5. In Colossians, Paul wrote that in Christ there cannot be a difference in status of slave and free but are all equal (Colossians 3:11). What is the significance of this?

Our social standing is not the same as our spiritual standing. In Christ, all are equal. This gives us great liberty (and responsibility!) within the church to be loving and accepting to all.

6. Why do you think the laws against runaway slaves was so harsh?

To suppress people and keep them from running away you need to make them very fearful.

7. Do you think the fact that Paul was in jail made him value freedom more?

(Answers vary.) Probably. He might have been thinking a great deal about the meaning of freedom since he did not have it.

8. Why didn't Paul force Philemon to free Onesimus?

He wanted to abide by the law of the land so Onesimus would not face legal punishment as a runaway and he wanted Philemon to make the right choice freely.

9. Do you think Philemon did what Paul had asked? What do some scholars say happened to Onesimus?

(Answers vary.) Scholars think that Onesimus went on to be bishop of Ephesus.

- *Challenging*

1. What was the relationship between Paul and Philemon? How do you think they met?

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression

3.4 Onesimus flees his Owner

Paul and Philemon were friends and brothers in Christ. Answers will vary, as this is just speculation. But we do know they were both in Rome.

2. **Why did Paul write to Philemon? What kind of role did Philemon have in the local church?**

Paul wanted Philemon to know about Onesimus. The church at Colossae met at Philemon's house. He was wealthy, and his house would have been large.

3. **Compare Onesimus' current behaviour to his past behaviour.**

Once Onesimus was a runaway slave but now he was a mature Christian and had been a great help to Paul while Paul was imprisoned. He was part of Paul's ministry team.

4. **What favour did Paul ask of Philemon? How did Paul try to persuade Philemon? What were the main points of his argument?**

He asked Philemon to free Onesimus. He argued that as a Christian, Onesimus was a brother in Christ. His points were that Onesimus was part of his ministry team and very useful to Paul personally; Onesimus is now to be considered a brother in Christ and all brothers are equal before Christ; Paul will repay anything owed; and he reminds Philemon that Philemon owes him his life!

5. **In Colossians, Paul wrote that in Christ there cannot be a difference in status of slave and free but are all equal (Colossians 3:11). What are the broader implications of this?**

(Opinions vary.) Our social standing is not the same as our spiritual standing. In Christ, all are equal. This gives us great liberty (and responsibility!) within the church to be loving and accepting to all. As Christians, we need to step outside our social restraints in terms of accepting others as equals.

6. **Why do you think the laws against runaway slaves was so harsh? Do you think the harsh laws achieved what they were meant to?**

To suppress people and keep them from running away you need to make them very fearful. Answers will vary on this. There were still some runaway slaves, such as Onesimus. Their harsh laws led to large slave revolts, such as that led by Spartacus.

7. **Why do you think Paul valued Onesimus' freedom so much?**

Paul knew what it was like to lose his freedom; he loved Onesimus like a son and wanted him to be free.

Chapter Three: Fleeing Oppression

3.4 Onesimus flees his Owner

8. Why didn't Paul force Philemon to free Onesimus? What kinds of issues might have restrained him?

He wanted to abide by the law of the land so Onesimus would not face legal punishment as a runaway and he wanted Philemon to make the right choice freely. If Paul forced his will, then he would be disrespecting the authority of Christ. Christ must be the changer of Philemon's heart.

9. Do you think Philemon did what Paul had asked? What do some scholars say happened to Onesimus?

(Answers vary.) Scholars think that Onesimus went on to be bishop of Ephesus.

Nehemiah, Back to Jerusalem

Nehemiah: 1-2

Background: Isaiah's prophecies and the rebuilding of Jerusalem

Isaiah was one of the major prophets of the Old Testament. He wrote his prophecies from about 701 BC to 681 BC. Among his many other prophecies, he wrote of the coming of the Babylonian captivity of Judah, the conquest of Babylon by the Medes, and the return of the Jews to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and its temple - under someone named Cyrus. Each of these 3 prophecies were fulfilled:

Exile to Babylon

Isaiah told the southern kingdom of Judah that they would be conquered by the Babylonians. He wrote this prophecy around 725 B.C., when Babylon was still under the control of the Assyrian Empire.

The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amos saw...The Lord of hosts is mustering the army for battle. They are coming from a far country...to destroy the whole land. (Isaiah 13: 1-6)

Over 80 years later, Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled when, in 609 B.C. Nabopolassar, King of Babylon conquered Assyria, and in 597 B.C., his son Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon conquered Judah.

The Babylonian exile happened in stages. First Nebuchadnezzar forced Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into being his vassal, and took the finest and brightest people of Jerusalem back to Babylon. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were part of that first exile. Jehoiakim rebelled and about 10 years later, Nebuchadnezzar returned, looted Jerusalem, took the royal family and most of the population of Judah back to Babylon (Ezekiel was among these), and appointed Zedekiah as king. Zedekiah rebelled, and 9 years later, Nebuchadnezzar came back, took most of the remaining Jews as slaves to Babylon, destroyed Jerusalem, and burned the houses and the temple (Solomon's Temple).

1. The Conquest of Babylon by the Medes

In the same chapter, in which Isaiah said Babylon would conquer Judah, he prophesied that Babylon would in turn fall by the hand of the Medes. At the time the Medes were a weak nation.

Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them (Babylon), ... and Babylon will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." (Isaiah 13:17-19)

Chapter Four: Returning Home
4.1 Nehemiah, Back to Jerusalem

About 187 years later this prophecy was fulfilled when, around 538 BC, the Medo-Persian Empire, under Cyrus the Great, conquered the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus was the grandson of a Median king.

2. The return of the Jews and the rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem under Cyrus

Around 711 B.C. Isaiah told the Jews that someone named Cyrus would cause Jerusalem and its temple to be rebuilt. This was 150 years before Cyrus the Great was born.

"It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'" (Isaiah 44:28, NASB)

The book of Ezra records Cyrus writing an edict for the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their Temple:

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia ...the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying: 'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem.'" (Ezra 1: 1-3, NASB).

Cyrus also restored to the Jews the articles looted by the Babylonians from Solomon's Temple (the Babylonians destroyed that temple). Daniel served Darius the Mede, placed as ruler over the city of Babylon by Cyrus the Great.

Cyrus was followed by King Cambyses II, then Darius I. Under Darius I the temple was completed (the Samaritans had opposed and temporarily stopped the Jews from building it). Darius was succeeded by Xerxes I, believed to be the king in the story of Esther. Xerxes I was followed by Artaxerxes I. Artaxerxes I is the one who gave Nehemiah the commission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

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4.1 Nehemiah, Back to Jerusalem

Before You Read:

1. Have you ever returned to a place that you knew as a child?
2. What were the changes to that place? How did you feel?

These questions are to get students thinking about 'home' and sorrow associated with its destruction. 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. The prophets said the Jews would return to Judah T .
2. Hanani, Nicodemus' brother, gave him good news about Jerusalem. F .
3. Nehemiah did not know why God had allowed the Israelites to be scattered F .
4. Nehemiah asked God and the king for help T .
5. 100 years had passed, and Jerusalem's walls had not yet been rebuilt T .
6. Artaxerxes did not respect Nehemiah F .
7. Everyone was happy that Artaxerxes helped provide for the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls F .

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

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. <u> f </u> fortress | a. shamed |
| 2. <u> g </u> captives | b. robber who takes things during a disaster |
| 3. <u> a </u> disgraced | c. large pieces of wood for building |

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4.1 Nehemiah, Back to Jerusalem

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 4. __h__ mourned | d. separate and go in different directions |
| 5. __b__ looter | e. not loyal in a relationship |
| 6. __d__ scatter | f. walled place, or a place difficult to enter |
| 7. __c__ timber | g. prisoners |
| 8. __e__ unfaithful | h. expressed deep sadness after a loss |

Fill in the blanks with the words above.

1. Nehemiah asked the king for __timber__ so he could build new city gates and a home for himself.
2. The Jews were __captives__ after the Babylonians forcibly took them from their homes.
3. The Babylonians went into the Temple and __looted__ it, taking all its valuable objects.
4. Nehemiah __mourned__ after he heard that Jerusalem was not a __fortress__ anymore because it had broken walls.
5. Hanani reported that the returned Jews in the ruined city of Jerusalem were __disgraced__.
6. The prophets said that when the people were __unfaithful__ to God, He would __scatter__ them everywhere.

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. What happened to the southern kingdom of Judah?
The Babylonians conquered it and carried off its people (in several stages) to Babylon.
2. What did Persia do for the Jews of Judah?

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4.1 Nehemiah, Back to Jerusalem

After conquering Babylonia, they allowed them to return to their homeland of Judah.

3. **Why might so few of the Jews been willing to return to Judah?**

Babylon lasted 70 years. Judah was conquered by Babylon in 597 B.C. and were freed when Persia conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., so the Jews were in Babylon about 58 years.

So, they probably had become settled in Babylon, owned fields there, had family there. They were probably reluctant to give this up and move back to the rubble of Judah and face the hard work of rebuilding.

4. **What was Nehemiah's job in Susa? What did he have to do in that job?**

Nehemiah was cupbearer to Artaxerxes, the king of Persia. He had to taste the wine before it was given to the king - both to make sure the wine was good and to make sure it wasn't poisoned. Some say that he would also be responsible for buying the wine.

5. **How did Nehemiah react when his brother, Hanani, and the other men told him how things were in Judah?**

Nehemiah wept, mourned, and fasted for days. He prayed, confessing his own sins, the sins of his family, and the sins of his people. He told God His promises to his people to rescue those who would turn to him, and bring them back to Jerusalem, the place where He had chosen to be worshipped. He prayed that God would make Artaxerxes respond to his requests that same day.

6. **Why was Nehemiah afraid when the king asked him why he was sad?**

To be sad was taken as taking lightly the honour of being in the king's presence. Therefore, a person could be killed for being sad in the king's presence.

7. **What things did Nehemiah ask of the king?**

He asked for a leave of absence to go back to Judah and rebuild the city of his ancestors. When Artaxerxes agreed to this, Nehemiah also asked for letters from the king that would give him passage through the Persian provinces west of the Euphrates, and a letter from the king granting him permission to take timber from the royal forest for rebuilding.

8. **What did you learn about king Artaxerxes from this story?**

He shows concern for Nehemiah, and willingness to help rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem. He trusts that Nehemiah will carry out this work

Chapter Four: Returning Home

4.1 Nehemiah, Back to Jerusalem

and return to serve him. He accepts the worship of other gods besides the Persian gods.

9. How was prayer important in this story?

100 years have passed since the Jews first returned to Jerusalem, and the walls have not been rebuilt. It's after Nehemiah's prayers that Artaxerxes gives him permission to rebuild the walls, and passage and timber to do so. The Bible says that Nehemiah fasted and prayed after talking with his brother and the men. The prayer records that he asked for an opportunity with Artaxerxes the same day as his prayer. We don't know how long after he started praying, that he prayed that prayer asking for an opportunity the same day. Nehemiah 1 says he talked with Hanani and the men in the month of Chislev (Kislev) and that he started praying then. Nehemiah 2 says that he had the opportunity to speak with Artaxerxes in the month of Nissan. Chislev and Nissan are about 4 months apart: Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, Adar, Nissan.

• *Intermediate*

1. What had happened to the southern kingdom of Judah?

The southern kingdom was conquered by Babylon and its people exiled to Babylon.

2. How did Persia's conquest of Babylonia affect the Jewish exiles of Judah?

King Cyrus of Persia allowed the Jews to return to Judah. (He actually commissioned them to rebuild the Temple.) However, Judah would remain a province of the Persian Empire. This also fulfilled prophecy from Isaiah 44:28, "It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd! And he will perform all My desire.' And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid.'"

3. How long had the Jews of Judah been in Babylon? Why might so few of them have been willing to return to Judah?

Jeremiah 29:10 says, "For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.'" Babylon lasted 70 years. Judah was conquered by Babylon in 597 B.C. and were freed when Persia conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., so the Jews were in Babylon about 58 years.

Nebuchadnezzar carried out 3 deportations of Jews from Judah. The first was about 597 BC, the second about 10 years later, and the third 9 years after that.

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4.1 Nehemiah, Back to Jerusalem

They had lived in Babylon for so long, that they would have put down roots there. The Persians were relatively benevolent rulers, and many of the Jews would rather stay there with friends and family than return and try to rebuild Jerusalem from rubble.

4. **Why would the Jews continue to trickle back to Jerusalem, even 100 years later?**

They still would have a national identity, and that identity was tied to the land God gave to them. The specific land of Canaan was promised to Abraham on several occasions, and these promises repeated to his grandson, Jacob - who God named Israel. The Jews knew from the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah that God called them to return there following the Babylonian captivity. (Though only 50,000 - relatively few of them - were interested in doing so.)

5. **Why do you think Nehemiah stayed in Susa, rather than return with his brother, Hanani, to Jerusalem?**

Nehemiah was born in Persia, about 100 years after Cyrus allowed their return. Nehemiah not only stayed on serving King Artaxerxes, he returned to Susa and resumed his service when he finished the work in Jerusalem. We can see in the book of Nehemiah, that he is a godly man. So perhaps Nehemiah was obligated by contract to Artaxerxes, or perhaps Nehemiah believed he could best serve God by remaining in Susa and serving Artaxerxes - and this is what the story shows, God used Nehemiah to accomplish what those who had returned had failed to do - rebuild the wall.

6. **Do you think Nehemiah still loved Jerusalem? Why or why not?**

Yes, he wept and fasted for 4 months because of his concern for Jerusalem. He risked his position and his life by approaching King Artaxerxes for a leave of absence and letters and supplies for rebuilding. In the next lesson, we see that Nehemiah spent over 20 years in Jerusalem, overseeing the rebuilding of the wall, the repopulation of Jerusalem, and the recommitment of the Jews to God via Ezra's reading of the law and the covenant they signed. And he did this despite the threats to his life by the enemies of Israel, and by some of the powerful Jews in the area who opposed him or were indifferent to him and his purposes.

7. **Do you think Hanani and the other men purposely went to visit Nehemiah to ask for help? Why or why not?**

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4.1 Nehemiah, Back to Jerusalem

Yes, that was a long trip to take for just a social visit. They knew that Nehemiah was in a position close to the king, and so if anyone could use their influence to help rebuild Jerusalem, it was Nehemiah.

8. **What things did Nehemiah tell God in his prayer? Why do you think he said these things to God?**

He acknowledges God's righteousness in having sent them into exile. He reminded God of His promises to Israel, that He would hear them even if they were far away from the land of Israel, if they would turn back to Him, and He would return them to their land. He asks God to answer his prayers and those of others who gladly served Him. Finally, he asked that He would cause Artaxerxes to be pleased with him, and to do whatever he asked. Daniel, when he prayed to God about the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, had also confessed his sins and his nations sins, and reminded God of His promises to Jeremiah of 70 years of Babylon's rule, followed by the return. So the confession of sins, and of God's promises are apparently key components of supplication. Nehemiah was also specific in his prayer. Nehemiah may be remembering the verse in Proverbs 21, "The heart of the king is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord...".

9. **How long did Nehemiah pray for? Why did God have him pray for this long a time?**

Nehemiah 1 says he talked with Hanani and the men in the month of Chislev (Kislev) and that he started praying then. Nehemiah 2 says that he had the opportunity to speak with Artaxerxes in the month of Nissan. Chislev and Nissan are about 4 months apart: Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, Adar, Nissan. Perhaps these months of prayer helped Nehemiah to build faith, build his prayer, and realize what to ask for from Artaxerxes.

10. **What did you learn about King Artaxerxes from this story? Can a ruler today be like this?**

Artaxerxes carried on the intentions of Cyrus the Great, showing honour to Cyrus as the founder of the Persian Empire. He treated Nehemiah with respect and interest by asking him why he was sad. He was willing to use his position to help one of his servants.

Leaders today may be willing to help those who work for them. In Canada we write to our Members of Parliament if we see something that needs government action.

Chapter Four: Returning Home

4.1 Nehemiah, Back to Jerusalem

But Artaxerxes had absolute power, few presidents or kings do today in the free world. In our government, opposition parties would immediately be looking for a way to discredit any policy introduced by a prime minister or president. Special interest groups opposed to such a policy would be posting objections and accusations in the news and organizing protests. (But the Samaritans succeeded in delaying Ezra's rebuilding of the temple (Zerubbabel's Temple) by sending accusations against the Jews to Darius I.)

- ***Challenging***

1. **How did the Persian conquest bring about the rebuilding of Jerusalem?**

Cyrus freed the Jews to return to Judah. (Not only that, Cyrus commissioned the Jews to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem, saying that the God of Israel had told him to do so. Cyrus gave the Jews all the articles of Solomon's Temple that the Babylonians had looted. Cyrus also helped fund the rebuilding of the temple. Cyrus also commissioned Ezra to instruct the returned Jews in the ways of their conduct and worship. When the Samaritans brought accusations against the repatriated Jews of Judah, and tried to stop the rebuilding of the Temple, Darius I investigated the matter, found Cyrus' decree and reinstated the rebuilding of the temple.)

Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and helped fund it by giving him the timber he needed.

2. **Why do you think Nehemiah remained in Susa, rather than return with his brother to Judah?**

Nehemiah was born in Persia, about 100 years after Cyrus allowed their return. Nehemiah not only stayed on serving King Artaxerxes, he returned to Susa and resumed his service when he finished the work in Jerusalem. We can see in the book of Nehemiah, that he is a godly man. So perhaps Nehemiah was obligated by contract to Artaxerxes, or perhaps Nehemiah believed he could best serve God by remaining in Susa and serving Artaxerxes - and this is what the story shows, God used Nehemiah to accomplish what those who had returned had failed to do - rebuild the wall.

3. **Why do you think Nehemiah's brother, Hanani, and the other men travelled the almost 1000 km from Jerusalem back to Susa?**

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4.1 Nehemiah, Back to Jerusalem

That was a long way to go just for a family visit, so they must have intended to speak with Nehemiah about the situation in Jerusalem in the hopes that Nehemiah could use his influence with Artaxerxes to help them. Since Hanani was Nehemiah's brother, he would know that Nehemiah was in position to do this, and that he had a good relationship with Artaxerxes. When Nehemiah asks them how Jerusalem is, they don't immediately tell him. In the book of Nehemiah, you see that Nehemiah put Hanani as one of the men in charge of governing Jerusalem because Hanani was a righteous man. So likely, Hanani and the other men had been praying for an opportunity with Nehemiah to talk about this.

4. What thoughts did Nehemiah express in his prayer to God? Why were these important thoughts for him to say?

He acknowledges God's righteousness in having sent them into exile. He reminded God of His promises to Israel, that He would hear them even if they were far away from the land of Israel, if they would turn back to Him, and He would return them to their land. He asks God to answer his prayers and those of others who gladly served Him. Finally, he asked that He would cause Artaxerxes to be pleased with him, and to do whatever he asked. Daniel, when he prayed to God about the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, had also confessed his sins and his nation's sins, and reminded God of His promises to Jeremiah of 70 years of Babylonian rule, followed by the return.

So the confession of sins, and of God's promises are apparently key components of supplication. Nehemiah was also specific in his prayer. Nehemiah may be remembering the verse in Proverbs 21, "The heart of the king is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord...".

5. How long was it before his prayer was answered? Why might it have taken this long?

Nehemiah 1 says he talked with Hanani and the men in the month of Chislev (Kislev) and that he started praying then. Nehemiah 2 says that he had the opportunity to speak with Artaxerxes in the month of Nissan. Chislev and Nissan are about 4 months apart: Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, Adar, Nissan. Perhaps these months of prayer helped Nehemiah to build faith, build his prayer, and realize what to ask for from Artaxerxes.

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6. **What was Nehemiah's position in Susa? How would this position have affected his relationship with the king?**

He was cupbearer. That meant he had to taste all the wine before the king drank any, to make sure the wine was good, and to make sure the wine was not poisoned. He also would have had to select the wines that would be purchased and served to the king. So, Nehemiah would have to know and care about the king's taste in wine. He looked after the welfare of the king by making sure the wine was good, and he literally risked his life for the king at every meal by tasting it.

Since he did this at every meal, the king would have known him and trusted him.

7. **What did Nehemiah ask the king for? Do you think these requests were too bold? Why or why not?**

These requests must have been appropriate, for God must have put them on Nehemiah's heart during those 4 months of prayer - and the king granted them. Cyrus the Great had shown the desire and will to rebuild places of worship, and particularly the temple in Jerusalem. Cyrus had also partially funded the rebuilding of the temple. So there was a precedent set in Persia that Nehemiah could work with.

8. **Why might God have picked Nehemiah for this work? What qualities of character did Nehemiah have?**

Nehemiah was in a strategic position, for as cupbearer he would have spent every meal with King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah also had favour with Artaxerxes, as shown by the king's relationship with him. Nehemiah would have learned much about ruling and overseeing from his work serving in the palace - useful for organizing the rebuilding of the wall and for dealing with opposition. Nehemiah loved Jerusalem as evidenced by his weeping when he heard Hanani's report. And Nehemiah was a godly man who knew God and knew the Scriptures, as evidenced by his prayer.

9. **Why was it important to rebuild Jerusalem?**

Without walls, Jerusalem and its people were vulnerable to attack - and Jerusalem had many enemies living nearby. The enemies could also loot the temple that had been rebuilt in Jerusalem by the command of Cyrus.

Jerusalem was also the capital city of Judah. It was both strategically and psychologically important for the Jews to have their capital city rebuilt so they could take pride in it and their nation and themselves again and start

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4.1 Nehemiah, Back to Jerusalem

rebuilding their nation. Also, if Jerusalem and Judah didn't rise again, the God of Judah would be discredited in the eyes of Judah's enemies.

Nehemiah, Rebuilding Jerusalem

Nehemiah: 2-13

Background: The disappearance of nations under the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests.

When the Assyrian Empire conquered the region of the Middle East, they destroyed the ability of the nations they conquered to regroup and rebel against their rule. They did this by emptying the people of a nation and dispersing them throughout their empire, far away from their homeland. They would then import several people groups from other conquered nations to inhabit the emptied land. This is what they did to the northern kingdom of Israel (722 BC). They dispersed its people far and wide and replanted the region with Gentiles from nations as far away as Elam (in what is now southern Iran.) Those 10 northern tribes became the "ten lost tribes of Israel" never to be heard from again.

Babylon similarly devastated the nations they attacked and conquered. They carted off the people of Jerusalem to Babylon where they stayed in exile for decades (598 BC).

Between the Assyrians and the Babylonians, many of the small nations that had previously been in the area disappeared, their people killed and so widely dispersed as to be no more. The Philistines were one such people that were gone forever.

Both Assyria and Babylon had more territory than they could keep control of. After the Assyrians conquered Elam, and dispersed its people, the Persians snuck down and took the land of Elam for themselves. They even made Susa, Elam's old capital city, their own capital city. After the Babylonians had conquered and removed the people from Judah, Ammon, and Edom, they could not defend those lands. The Arabs snuck into Edom and forced the Edomites to flee. The Edomites snuck into southern Judah and took that land for themselves. As the Arabs took the devastated lands of others, the people of those lands assimilated with the Arabs and lost their old national identities. The Ammonites were one such people.

Background: Zerubbabel's Temple

The Babylonians looted, burned and destroyed Solomon's Temple. The Persians conquered Babylonia and allowed the nations exiled by Babylon to return home. Cyrus, the Persian king had ordered the Jews to rebuild their Temple. This rebuilding was difficult as only about 50,000 Jews were willing to return, and

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4.2 Nehemiah, Rebuilding Jerusalem

Judah had been looted and devastated by the Babylonians; it had no wealth to rebuild with. Cyrus appointed Zerubbabel as the first governor of Judah. He was part of the first wave of Jews to return to Jerusalem (538 BC). He rebuilt the Temple despite active opposition and setbacks from the Samaritans. He was aided in this work by Joshua, the high priest, and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Because of lack of money and manpower, this temple was a shadow of its former glory. Some of the older Jews who had returned (and who had seen Solomon's Temple) wept. This temple is sometimes called Zerubbabel's Temple, but more often called the Second Temple.

Before You Read:

1. What is the most difficult thing you have ever done? Did you have help?

This question is to get students thinking about big projects and teamwork. 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

A. Match Nehemiah's problem to his solution of the problem:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 8. <u>d</u> The city wall was rubble, and the gates were burnt. | a. Nehemiah told the Jews to carry spears and swords as they worked. |
| 9. <u>f</u> Their enemies insulted the Jews who were rebuilding. | b. Nehemiah said, "Don't be afraid of your enemies! The Lord is great and fearsome. Fight!" |
| 10. <u>a</u> Their enemies planned to attack the Jews. | c. Ezra the priest read God's law to the people every day. |
| 11. <u>b</u> The Jews were afraid of their enemies. | d. Nehemiah organized the Jews to rebuild the wall. |
| 12. <u>e</u> Some rich Jews sold their poor countryman as slaves. | e. Nehemiah called a meeting and told the leaders to honour God by how they lived. |

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4.2 Nehemiah, Rebuilding Jerusalem

13. c The Jewish exiles didn't know God's law.
14. g After Nehemiah went back to Persia, the Jews stopped following God's law.
- f. Nehemiah told them God would make the work succeed, but they had no part in it.
- g. Nehemiah returned and made sure people obeyed God.

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

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. <u>c</u> pagans | a. weak |
| 2. <u>e</u> ruins | b. admit something wrong |
| 3. <u>f</u> resented | c. people who worship other gods |
| 4. <u>a</u> feeble | d. large broken pieces |
| 5. <u>d</u> rubble | e. destroyed so it can't be used |
| 6. <u>g</u> mortgage | f. felt angry or bitter about |
| 7. <u>h</u> fasted | g. a loan secured by property |
| 8. <u>b</u> confessed | h. stopped eating |

Fill in the blanks with the words above.

1. One hundred years after the Jews were allowed to return, Jerusalem was still in ruins and full of rubble.
2. Their enemies were pagans who worshiped other gods and they resented the Jews return.
3. Sanballat called the Jewish workers "a feeble bunch".
4. The poor Jews had mortgaged their lands and houses to buy food.
5. The Jewish exiles wanted to show God that they were sorry, so they fasted and confessed their sins. Nehemiah away from his work by asking to meet with him away from Jerusalem.

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4.2 Nehemiah, Rebuilding Jerusalem

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. When did Nehemiah go to look at the walls of Jerusalem? Why do you think he chose that time?

He inspected them late at night. The Scripture says he got up at night, so this would be well after everyone was sleeping. He wanted his plan to remain secret, so he didn't tell anyone or want anyone to see him.

2. What did Nehemiah tell the leaders of Jerusalem?

He told them the city was a mess and they should rebuild the city wall so that they could be proud of their city. He also told them how God had helped him, and how king Artaxerxes had been kind.

3. How did Nehemiah organize the work of rebuilding the wall?

He assigned sections of the wall to individual groups of people, such as families. He wrote down the names of everyone who helped rebuild.

4. How did their enemies try to stop the people from rebuilding the wall?

They insulted the builders, and the quality of their work. They threatened to attack the builders.

5. How did Nehemiah encourage the people who were rebuilding the wall?

He told the people (and their enemies) that God "will make our work succeed". He told them not to be afraid because their God was "great and fearsome".

6. What had happened to the poor people in the nearby villages?

There had been a famine, and they had to mortgage their homes and fields to money lenders in order to buy food. When they couldn't repay, the money lenders had taken the homes and fields, and sold their children as slaves. They were now destitute.

7. Who were Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem? Why were they against Nehemiah?

They were government officials who did not know God. Historical sources list Sanballat as governor of Samaria. Tobiah was an Ammonite - traditional enemies of Israel. Geshem was an Arab. Arabs had moved into Edom after the Babylonian conquest. None of them wanted the Jews to have any power

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4.2 Nehemiah, Rebuilding Jerusalem

or place in the land where they were living. In the Scripture, Tobiah opposed Nehemiah from the first day Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem. He was well connected with the leaders of Jerusalem.

8. **Did the people stay faithful to God? Are you surprised by this?**

No, when Nehemiah went back to Jerusalem later on for a visit, he found that they were not following the Mosaic law (they were buying and selling on the Sabbath, marrying pagans, and not instructing their children to follow Jewish ways or to even speak Hebrew). They were not paying their tithe to keep the Temple up (the singers and the Levites lost their jobs). They had cleared out one of the rooms of the Temple and let Tobiah, an enemy of Nehemiah, live there.

This is surprising considering all the effort - over 12 years - that Nehemiah had put into city and the people. Ezra had read the law for days, they had listened and pledged to be faithful to God. Also, they had just returned from Babylon and they had been exiled there by God precisely because of their disobedience. (But people are like that. Christians have the Holy Spirit in them yet still often are lukewarm to the things of God.)

- *Intermediate*

1. **What did Nehemiah do before talking to Jerusalem's leaders? What do you think about this?**

He kept his intentions secret. He didn't tell anyone. He inspected the walls and gates late at night. The Scripture says he got up at night, so this would be well after everyone was sleeping. So no one could see what he was doing. I think Nehemiah showed wisdom in this, for he did face opposition. He had his plan in place before he spoke to anyone, and because he had his plan in place, the leaders became excited about rebuilding, and then everyone got committed to the project. Probably his service close to the king (as cup bearer to Artaxerxes) had taught him how to be wise in dealing with others and taking pre-emptive measures against opposition.

2. **Who took on the building of the wall? Why was this important? What does this tell you about Nehemiah?**

Everyone, from high priest to sons and daughters, from rulers to perfumers. This involved the whole community in a common purpose. It got the walls up quickly, before Nehemiah's enemies had time to get support

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4.2 Nehemiah, Rebuilding Jerusalem

and gather an army. This shows Nehemiah's wisdom in organizing and working with people, and again in pre-empting enemies.

3. Nehemiah had problems with enemy groups, but also some Jewish leaders: 6:¹⁸ *Many people in Judah were loyal to Tobiah for two reasons: Shecaniah son of Arah was his father-in-law, and Tobiah's son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah.* What were the reasons Samaritans and Jews had for opposing the rebuilding?

Some of the people came from tribes that had been old enemies of Israel. Babylon had conquered and devastated those tribes, and since their hopes for their nations existing again were gone, they did not want to see Israel exist again. Some of the enemies were Arabs; the Arabs had taken advantage of the Babylonian conquest by seizing the land of the Edomites, they would not want to see Israel re-emerge and become a force that could oppose further seizures of land.

As for the leading Jews, they may have had financial dealings with some of these enemies. They had returned to Jerusalem, but apparently some saw it as a business venture rather than a fulfillment of God's plans for His nation. Perhaps they were jealous of Nehemiah's position of governor; they had been the rulers before he came to town.

4. How did Nehemiah's enemies try to stop the rebuilding of the wall?
They tried to discourage the builders by mocking the quality of their work. (They said that even a small fox could tear down the wall they were building - so why continue building it.) They threatened to attack the builders (they spoke their accusations of Nehemiah's intentions to oppose the Persian king in front of the Samaritan army, probably hoping that this army would attack Jerusalem and stop the rebuilding.)
5. Was it okay for the money lenders to take the house and fields of the people who could not pay back their loans? Why or why not?
Permanent holding of a debtor's property or person was against God's law for fellow Jews (Deut. 15:7 - 18). Debts and indentured servants were released in the 7th year. These people had not gotten into debt through poor living or lavish spending. The famine had forced them to borrow and had kept them from being able to repay. These people had all left homes and stability in Persia to return and rebuild Jerusalem and Judah, in accordance with God's will as given to them by the prophets. They were all to be part of a common vision in this work, and to have their eyes on this

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4.2 Nehemiah, Rebuilding Jerusalem

work, not on their own profit. So they should have not charged interest, and have forgiven the debts given the circumstances. In the Mosaic law, every 50 years (the year of Jubilee), debts were to be forgiven and land returned to the original family.

6. Why would Nehemiah want people to stay inside the city of Jerusalem?

Though the walls and gates were up, the city would still be vulnerable to attack. Having people living there would ensure that they kept guards on the walls at night, and if they lived there, they would fight for their city. Also, Jerusalem was the capital of Judah, and it was full of rubble, for their own pride in their nation, they needed to rebuild the city.

7. Did the people all remain faithful to God? Why or why not? Why would they let that happen?

No, when Nehemiah went back to Jerusalem later on for a visit, he found that they were not following the Mosaic law (they were buying and selling on the Sabbath, marrying pagans, and not instructing their children to follow Jewish ways or to even speak Hebrew). They were not paying their tithe to keep the Temple up (the singers and the Levites lost their jobs). They had cleared out one of the rooms of the Temple and let Tobiah, an enemy of Nehemiah, live there.

This is surprising considering all the effort - over 12 years - that Nehemiah had put into city and the people. Ezra had read the law for days, they had listened and pledged to be faithful to God. Also, they had just returned from Babylon and they had been exiled there by God precisely because of their disobedience.

They had the Law read to them for days on end, yet it failed to keep their hearts and minds on God. Christians have the Holy Spirit in them yet still often are lukewarm to the things of God and put their own welfare and worldly values first. Hence our need to be saved by grace and not by works.

8. What have you learned about the character of Nehemiah in this story?

Nehemiah is a God-fearing man. He left his high position serving the king of Persia and took his family back to the rubble, corruption, and disbelief of Jerusalem. These people had returned many decades earlier, and yet had not enough character to get the wall rebuilt themselves. Yet Nehemiah gave up his good life for them. He could have stayed on in Jerusalem as its governor, but he honoured his commitment to serve Artaxerxes and returned to him.

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4.2 Nehemiah, Rebuilding Jerusalem

Nehemiah was also very wise and skilled in leading. He was able to get all the people of Jerusalem and its nearby villages involved in the rebuilding of the wall. He anticipated and pre-empted enemies of the rebuilding (keeping his mission secret until he had a plan in place, refusing to give time or respect to his enemies, not falling for their plots. He had vision to see the need to rebuild the city as well. He probably learned much of these skills from his time serving the Persian king Artaxerxes.

- ***Challenging***

1. **Why might Nehemiah have at first kept his plans hidden from the people and the leaders of Jerusalem?**

He must have anticipated the enemies and opposition he would face. He could have learned to anticipate enemies from king Artaxerxes whom he had served. As he travelled with Artaxerxes soldiers and supply of timber he would have passed through various check-points at Persia's provincial borders - and he would have seen and read the faces of those who may have resented Nehemiah's mission.

Babylon had destroyed many nations and peoples, and they would be jealous if Israel got the kings help to rebuild, but they hadn't. The Arabs had taken advantage of the Babylonian conquests to sneak into devastated lands and take them for themselves; they had forced the Edomites from their land and taken Edom for themselves. The Edomites had to flee to what had been southern Judah (emptied by the Babylonians) and so would have feared that if Judah were to re-emerge as a power it would reclaim its land.

By keeping quiet, Nehemiah was able to get a plan in place and excite the leaders with it before opposition and nay-sayers could stop the project.

2. **Were the Jews sincere about wanting to rebuild their walls? Back up your answer.**

They had not been sincere before Nehemiah shared his plans. They had returned to Judah from Persia decades before but had not gotten the wall rebuilt.

But when Nehemiah told the leaders and the people the plans, and organized the rebuild, they became very sincere. They worked side-by-side regardless of their social position or abilities. They withstood the mocking of their enemies, and they did double duty as guards and builders, even

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4.2 Nehemiah, Rebuilding Jerusalem

sleeping in the rubble of Jerusalem, fully clothed and ready to fight an attack.

They listened to Ezra read the law for days. They wept and pledged themselves to serve God.

3. Nehemiah named all the people who helped rebuild the walls and listed all their occupations (Chapter 3). He noted those who wouldn't help but didn't list their names. Why do you think he did all that?

He put all their names down in a record for all eternity. We read their names thousands of years later. And so they knew how important their work was, and that it was for God. The various occupations told all to come that it didn't matter whether you were rich or poor, a high priest or a scoundrel, an experienced builder or a perfumer, everyone had a contribution to make and a responsibility in working together to accomplish God's will.

By not naming those who didn't help, Nehemiah did not shame the descendants of those who did not help. But by noting that some had done so, he let them know that some had forever missed out on God's vision - a warning to future generations.

4. Is it right for a money lender to take the homes and fields of those who could not repay their loans? Why or why not?

It was legal, but not ethical given the circumstances. These people had not gotten into debt through poor living or lavish spending. The famine had forced them to borrow and had kept them from being able to repay. These people had all left homes and stability in Persia to return and rebuild Jerusalem and Judah, in accordance with God's will as given to them by the prophets. They were all to be part of a common vision in this work, and to have their eyes on this work, not on their own profit. So they should have not charged interest, and have forgiven the debts given the circumstances. In the Mosaic law, every 50 years (the year of Jubilee), debts were to be forgiven.

5. Nehemiah notes in 6:¹⁸ *Many people in Judah were loyal to Tobiah for two reasons: Shecaniah son of Arah was his father-in-law, and Tobiah's son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah.* Why did Nehemiah's enemies try to stop him? Why would some of the Jews of Jerusalem try to stop him? Why would some of them honour Tobiah over Nehemiah?

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4.2 Nehemiah, Rebuilding Jerusalem

Some of the people came from tribes that had been old enemies of Israel. Babylon had conquered and devastated those tribes, and since their hopes for their nations existing again were gone, they did not want to see Israel, their old enemy, exist again. Some of Nehemiah's enemies were Arabs; the Arabs had taken advantage of the Babylonian conquest by seizing the land of the Edomites, they would not want to see Israel re-emerge and become a force that could oppose further seizures of land.

The Edomites had been occupying the southern land of Judah, they did not want Judah to be rebuilt and reclaim their land.

As for the leading Jews, they may have had financial dealings with some of these enemies. They had returned to Jerusalem, but apparently, some saw it as a business venture rather than a fulfillment of God's plans for His nation. Perhaps they were jealous of Nehemiah's position of governor; they had been the rulers before he came to town. They may also have resented their loss of position as city rulers when Nehemiah arrived as governor.

They had family ties with Tobiah, and maybe financial ties as well. Despite everything Nehemiah had done for them, they were still willing to honour Nehemiah's enemy. As Jeremiah said, "The heart is desperately sick and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

6. How long did Nehemiah spend in Jerusalem? What did he accomplish there?

He spent twelve years there. He united the people, turned them back to God, got the walls and gates of Jerusalem rebuilt, and moved people back into Jerusalem to rebuild the city.

Jerusalem was the capital city of Judah. With that city rebuilt against all appearances and despite opposition and threats, the people realized they could work together and accomplish the rebuilding of their nation.

7. What did Nehemiah find when he later returned to Jerusalem? How do you explain this? How does this relate to the gospel?

When Nehemiah went back to Jerusalem later for a visit, he found that they were not following the Mosaic law (they were buying and selling on the Sabbath, marrying pagans, and not instructing their children to follow Jewish ways or to even speak Hebrew). They were not paying their tithe to keep the Temple up (the singers and the Levites lost their jobs). They had cleared out one of the rooms of the Temple and let Tobiah, an enemy of Nehemiah, live there.

This is surprising considering all the effort - over 12 years - that Nehemiah had put into city and the people. Ezra had read the law for days, they had

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4.2 Nehemiah, Rebuilding Jerusalem

listened and pledged to be faithful to God. Also, they had just returned from Babylon and they had been exiled there by God precisely because of their disobedience.

They had the Law read to them for days on end, had wept and confessed their sins, and pledged their names to serve God, yet it failed to keep their hearts and minds on God. Christians have the Holy Spirit in them yet still often are lukewarm to the things of God and put their own welfare and worldly values first.

No matter the heroic efforts made by Nehemiah, the people were not able to be faithful to God. We are just not able to do it no matter how good our teachers, our circumstances, our intentions. Hence our need to be saved by grace and not by works.

8. What did you learn about Nehemiah's character from this story?

Nehemiah is a God-fearing man. He left his high position serving the king of Persia and took his family back to the rubble, corruption, and disbelief of Jerusalem. These people had returned many decades earlier, and yet had not enough character to get the wall rebuilt themselves. Yet Nehemiah gave up his good life for them. He could have stayed on in Jerusalem as its governor, but he honoured his commitment to serve Artaxerxes and returned to him.

Nehemiah was also very wise and skilled in leading. He was able to get all the people of Jerusalem and its nearby villages involved in the rebuilding of the wall. He anticipated and pre-empted enemies of the rebuilding (keeping his mission secret until he had a plan in place, refusing to give time or respect to his enemies, not falling for their plots. He had vision to see the need to rebuild the city as well. He probably learned much of these skills from his time serving the Persian king Artaxerxes.

The Ethiopian Eunuch, back to Ethiopia

Acts 8:26-40

Background: Isaiah 53

¹Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

²For He grew up before Him like
a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no *stately* form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted
to Him.

³He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem
Him.

⁴Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

⁵But He was pierced through for our
transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon
Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

⁶All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us
all
To fall on Him.

⁷He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,

And like a sheep that is silent before its
shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

⁸By oppression and judgment He was taken
away;

And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the
living

For the transgression of my people, to whom
the stroke *was due*?

⁹His grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

¹⁰But the LORD was pleased
To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief;
If He would render Himself *as a*
guilt offering,

He will see *His* offspring,
He will prolong *His* days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will
prosper in His hand.

¹¹As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see *it and* be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.

¹²Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with
the great,
And He will divide the booty with the
strong;

Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.

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4.3 The Ethiopian Eunuch, back to Ethiopia

The passage the Ethiopian eunuch was reading was Isaiah 53, verses 7 and 8. Isaiah 53 in its entirety was held by many rabbis to be a Messianic prophecy. As Christians, we can see that Jesus fulfilled every point in this prophecy. Many people, on hearing this prophecy, think it is such an uncanny description of the life of Jesus, that it must be from the New Testament, not realizing that it was written by Isaiah 700 years before the birth of Jesus.

Before You Read:

1. What do you do when you cannot understand something?

This question is to get students thinking about our limitations. 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 correct order. The first is done for you:

- a) 3 The Lord's angel told Philip to go south on the desert road.
- b) 5 The Holy Spirit told Philip to catch up with the chariot.
- c) 7 Philip explained to the official all about Jesus.
- d) 6 The Ethiopian invited Philip to come up and explain the meaning of what he was reading.
- e) 8 The official asked to be baptized when they came to water.
- f) 1 Philip fled to Samaria after there was persecution in Jerusalem.
- g) 2 Philip told the Samaritans about Jesus and did miracles in His name.
- h) 4 An Ethiopian official was in a chariot reading Isaiah on the road.

Chapter Four: Returning Home
4.3 The Ethiopian Eunuch, back to Ethiopia

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

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| __e__ 1. wave of persecution | a. a person in charge of money |
| __h__ 2. scattered | b. unable to function properly |
| __b__ 3. crippled | c. to be washed with water to show to other people one's faith |
| __a__ 4. treasurer | d. unable to walk |
| __d__ 5. lame | e. time when many people are mistreated |
| __g__ 6. a nobody | f. grabbed away |
| __f__ 7. snatched | g. an unimportant person |
| __c__ 8. baptized | h. to be spread out |

Fill in the blanks with the words above.

1. The believers in Jerusalem were ___scattered___ after a ___ wave of persecution___.
2. Philip healed many Samaritans who were ___lame___ or ___crippled___.
3. The official from Ethiopia was a ___treasurer___ for the queen.
4. Isaiah wrote that Jesus the Messiah would be treated like a ___nobody___ and his life would be ___snatched___ away.
5. Philip ___ baptized ___ the man after he said he believed 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. What happened to the church in Jerusalem?
After the death of Stephen, the church was persecuted by the Jewish authorities. Many followers scattered to other places.
2. Who was Philip?

Chapter Four: Returning Home
4.3 The Ethiopian Eunuch, back to Ethiopia

Philip was part of the group that was chosen to serve at the tables, because he was "filled with the Holy Spirit".

3. **What did Philip do after he fled from Jerusalem?**
He fled to Samaria and had told many about the good news of Jesus Christ while healing in Jesus' name and doing many miracles.
4. **What did the angel of the Lord tell Philip to do?**
Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."
5. **Who was the Ethiopian official and what was he reading?**
The eunuch was an important official in charge of all the treasury of the queen of the Ethiopians. He was reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet.
6. **What question did Philip ask the official?**
He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"
7. **What question did the official ask Philip?**
He asked, "Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or someone else?"
8. **Why do you think the official wanted to be baptized?**
He understood who Jesus was and believed in Him. (implied)
9. **What happened to Philip after he baptised the Ethiopian?**
The Spirit of the Lord took him away.

• *Intermediate*

1. **What happened to the church in Jerusalem?**
After the death of Stephen, the church was persecuted by the Jewish authorities.
2. **Who was Philip? What did Philip do after he fled from Jerusalem?**
Philip was part of the group that was chosen to serve at the tables, because he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Later he had fled to Samaria and had told many about the good news of Jesus Christ while healing in Jesus' name and doing many miracles
3. **What did the angel of the Lord tell Philip to do?**
Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza."

Chapter Four: Returning Home
4.3 The Ethiopian Eunuch, back to Ethiopia

4. Who was the Ethiopian official and what was he reading? How do we know he was an important man in Ethiopia?

The Ethiopian was an important official in charge of all the treasury of the queen of the Ethiopians. He was reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. We know he was important because he was riding a chariot with a driver.

5. What question did the official ask Philip? How did Philip answer him?

He asked, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Philip explained that the Scripture referred to Jesus.

6. What shows us that the Ethiopian understood and accepted what Philip told him?

He wanted to be baptised.

7. Why do you think God chose such an unusual method of transporting Philip after he baptized the official?

Perhaps this was because the conversation between Philip and the Ethiopian took some time, and all the while the chariot was travelling southward to Egypt (and then on to Ethiopia). To get home, Philip would have had a very long walk along a desert road, and he did not have water or food with him (the Spirit had told him to go immediately to the road to meet the eunuch). Commentator David Guzikⁱ says this was a strange and unprecedented event. He points out that a similar thing happened when the disciple's boat came immediately to its destination in John 6. He also points out that a similar thing will happen when the church is "caught up together with Him" in 1 Thess. 4. *Got Questions*ⁱⁱ says that God works in ways that are often deemed "mysterious" - that is to say, God's methods often leave people totally bewildered. He always has a good reason for them, just a reason beyond our current understanding.

8. What do you think has been the impact on Ethiopia because of this encounter?

For sure, the eunuch would have told his story to others. Probably many Ethiopians believed because of his testimony. He was a respected person in his country. Ethiopia became one of the first Christian countries in the world.

• *Challenging*

1. What happened to the church in Jerusalem? Why do you think God allowed this to happen?

Chapter Four: Returning Home
4.3 The Ethiopian Eunuch, back to Ethiopia

After the death of Stephen, the church was persecuted by the Jewish authorities. Answers will vary, but Jesus told the church it would face persecution, and the persecution spread the believers out to other nations - and they took the gospel with them.

2. **Would you consider Philip a faithful follower of Christ? Why?**
Yes because he continued to tell people about Christ - even the hated Samaritans.
3. **What did the angel of the Lord tell Philip to do? What do you think Philip thought about this? Would you feel the same? Would you obey?**
Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." Answers will vary in the three other questions.
4. **What was revealed about the Ethiopian man in this story? How important is this information?**
He was an important official in Ethiopia (in charge of all the treasury of the queen of the Ethiopians). Most importantly, he was reading God's word (Isaiah) and trying to understand it.
5. **What is the significance of the question the official asked Philip? How did Philip answer him?**
He asked, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Philip explained that the Scripture referred to Jesus.
6. **What are the indicators that the Ethiopian understood and accepted what Philip told him?**
He wanted to be baptised.
7. **Why do you think God chose such an unusual method of transporting Philip? Why doesn't God do this all the time?**
Perhaps this was because the conversation between Philip and the Ethiopian took some time, and all the while the chariot was travelling southward to Egypt (and then on to Ethiopia). To get home, Philip would have had a very long walk along a desert road, and he did not have water or food with him (the Spirit had told him to go immediately to the road to meet the eunuch). Commentator David Guzikⁱⁱⁱ says this was a strange and unprecedented event. He points out that a similar thing happened when the disciple's boat came immediately to its destination in John 6. He also points out that a similar thing will happen when the church is "caught up together with Him"

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in 1 Thess. 4. *Got Questions*^{iv} says that God works in ways that are often deemed “mysterious” - that is to say, God’s methods often leave people totally bewildered.

If God gave us all free and miraculous transport, many would follow Him and might be deceived into thinking they had placed their faith in Him, when really they had no interest in Him beyond the free trip.

Throughout the Old and New Testament we see that God uses miraculous events to testify as to who He is. We also see that the people did not retain faith after witnessing these miraculous events. In the O.T., after Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mt. Carmel, all Israel believed in God; 20 years later they were back to worshipping Baal. The people of Jerusalem had witnessed Jesus’ miracles and shouted Hosannah to the Son of David when Jesus entered on the donkey; within a few days they were shouting, “Crucify him!”

8. How do you think Ethiopia changed because of this encounter? What proof do we have today?

For sure, the eunuch would have told his story to others. Probably many Ethiopians believed because of his testimony. He was a respected person in his country. The proof we have today is the presence of the Ethiopian church, which has one the longest Christian histories of any country.

ⁱ Study Guide for Acts 8 by David Guzik – Blue Letter Bible. www.blueletterbible.org

ⁱⁱ What does it mean that God works in mysterious ways? gotquestions.org

ⁱⁱⁱ Study Guide for Acts 8 by David Guzik – Blue Letter Bible. www.blueletterbible.org

^{iv} What does it mean that God works in mysterious ways? gotquestions.org

Jonah Flees God

Jonah 1,2,3

Background: Assyria, the northern Kingdom of Israel, and Jonah the prophet

Assyria was a regional power from the time of the 12th century BC. But in 853 BC, Shalmaneser III of Assyria built the nation into an empire. The power of a nation at that time was in its city states. The Assyrian policy was to bring a show of power to a city they intended to conquer, prompting that city to offer an annual tribute of money to Assyria. If the city refused this tribute, or reneged on it, the city was attacked, and its people killed in an unfathomably cruel way.

Aram (Syria) led a coalition against Assyria with several nations, including the troops of King Ahab (874-853 BC) of the northern kingdom of Israel (Ephraim). They were violently defeated by Shalmaneser III in 853 BC.

Aram (Syria) was a fair-weather ally; when Assyrian troops were busy elsewhere, Hazael, king of Aram (Syria) and his son Ben Hadad III attacked the northern kingdom of Israel, destroyed most of its army, and took land (2 Kings 13). King Jehoahaz (814-798 BC) of Israel called out to God for relief.

In the time of Jehoahaz's son, King Jehoash (Joash), King Adad-nirari III of Assyria returned to the region and defeated King Ben Hadad III, son of King Hazael of Aram (Syria). With encouragement from Elisha the prophet, King Jehoash of Israel now fought the weakened Aram (Syria) and won. But he also had to recognize Assyrian power and pay tribute money to them.

In the time of Jehoash's (Joash's) son, king Jeroboam II (793-753 BC), Israel retook its land from Aram (Syria), and Israel prospered. 2 Kings 13:25 says that Jonah had prophesied these good times for northern Israel and its king, Jeroboam II.

But God also called Jonah to preach to Nineveh, one of the largest cities in the world of its time; and the capital city and pride of the Assyrian Empire. And Assyria was still very much a threat to Israel (Ephraim). In 701 BC, Assyria started attacking Israel, and in 722 BC, finished it off. They scattered much of Israel's people throughout the Assyrian empire and replaced its population with

Chapter Five: Spreading the Message

5.1 Jonah flees God

pagans. The scattered people of northern Israel (Ephraim) were never heard from again and become known as the 10 lost tribes.

As for the Ninevites, although they honestly repented after hearing Jonah's message, they returned to their old ways. Assyria was still at the height of its power when the prophet Nahum said Nineveh would fall. The Assyrian Empire was conquered by a coalition of Babylonians, Scythians, and Medes in 612 BC; Nineveh was sacked.

Background: the resurrection symbolism in Jonah

This story resonates with resurrection symbolism. Jesus referred to it in Luke 11: 29-32:

²⁹ As the crowds increased, Jesus said, "This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰ For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹ The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom; and now something greater than Solomon is here. ³² The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now something greater than Jonah is here.

Jonah's emergence from the fish was God's sign to Nineveh that he was God's prophet. Jesus' resurrection from the dead was God's sign to Israel that He was God's Messiah. Jonah came out of the fish after three days and three nights. Jesus came out of the tomb after three days and three nights.

In Hebrew reckoning of time, the term "three days and three nights" refers to something that occurs over a three-day period, whether three days in part or in whole (*What is the sign of Jonah?* gotQuestions.org. Retrieved August 2017.).

Before You Read:

1. How do people act when they need to do something that they do not want to do?

This question is to get students thinking about the weaknesses of 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

Change these False statements to be True

1. Jonah wanted to go and preach to the people of Nineveh. ___Jonah did not want to go and preach to the people of Nineveh__.
2. Jonah was happy to go but he had to go to Tarshish first. ___Jonah was not happy to go, so he took a ship to Tarshish away from Nineveh__.
3. The sailors threw the cargo below deck. ___The sailors threw the cargo overboard__.
4. The sailors caught a large fish. ___God sent a large fish to swallow Jonah__.
5. God could not hear Jonah's prayer from inside the fish. ___God heard Jonah's prayer, and the fish vomited him out on land__.
6. Jonah was very happy that the people of Nineveh listened to God. ___Jonah was very angry that the people of Nineveh listened to God, so God did not destroy them__.
7. God wanted to destroy the evil people of Nineveh. ___God did not want to destroy Nineveh because He is merciful and patient__.

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

Word or Phrase	Meaning
___e___ 1. ruthlessly	a. clothing people wore when very sad
___g___ 2. doomed	b. the lower floor of a ship
___f___ 3. drowning	c. to throw up stomach contents
___h___ 4. cargo	d. off the ship
___b___ 5. below deck	e. without mercy
___a___ 6. sackcloth	f. death by water

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5.1 Jonah flees God

___c___7. vomit

g. surely destroyed in future

___d___8. overboard

h. things carried by the ship to be sold later

Fill in the blanks with the words above.

1. The people of Nineveh wore ___sackcloth___ to show God they were sorry.
2. Jonah was sleeping ___below deck___ when the sailors prayed to their gods to save them from ___drowning___ in the storm.
3. Jonah told Nineveh that they were ___doomed___ because they ___ruthlessly___ sinned against other nations.
4. The ___cargo___ was thrown ___overboard___ by the sailors during the storm.
5. A big fish swallowed Jonah, and then God commanded it to ___vomit___ him up on land.

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 God want Jonah to do?
He wanted him to preach to the people of Nineveh that they would be punished by God for their wickedness.
2. Why did Jonah take a ship to Tarshish?
Because he was fleeing God's request. He tried to go as far as he could from Nineveh.
3. What happened on the trip to Tarshish?
A violent storm arose, and the ship was in danger of sinking.
4. What did the sailors do first?
They got rid of their cargo.
5. Why did they wake up Jonah?
They wanted him to pray to God to stop the storm.
6. What did Jonah tell them to do?

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Jonah told them to pick him up and throw him into the sea.

7. **Why were the sailors afraid when they heard Jonah worshipped the God of Heaven who made the sea and land?**

They already knew that Jonah was running away from a god, but they had not realized the power of his God, the God of Heaven. The God who made the sea must have complete power over the sea, and they knew He was angry at Jonah's disobedience. They could all die!

8. **What happened to Jonah when he fell into the sea?**

A big fish swallowed him so that he didn't drown.

9. **What happened to Nineveh because of Jonah's preaching?**

They believed in God and they were not destroyed.

10. **Why do you think God gave Jonah and Nineveh a second chance?**

Both Jonah and the people of Nineveh were sorry about disobeying God. Jonah knew about God, so he knew what he had done was wrong, but God said the people of Nineveh did not know right from wrong. God had mercy and patience with both.

11. **Why do you think Jonah felt so angry that Nineveh was not destroyed?**

The Ninevites were Israel's enemies and they had done very horrible evil things.

- ***Intermediate***

1. **What did God want Jonah to do? Why would this be something Jonah would not want to do?**

God wanted him to preach to the people of Nineveh that they would be punished by God for their wickedness. Assyria was oppressing Jonah's people, and Jonah did not want them to be given a chance to repent.

2. **What was Jonah's response? Why would Jonah choose Tarshish?**

He disobeyed God: he tried to go as far as he could from Nineveh. Tarshish was in southern Spain. That was as far as he could go in the opposite direction.

3. **What did God do to make Jonah go back? What did Jonah tell the sailors?**

God caused a violent storm to force the ship back. Jonah told them that God was causing the storm because he was running away from Him.

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5.1 Jonah flees God

4. How did the sailors react when they heard who Jonah worshipped? How did God use the storm to not only teach Jonah but also bless the sailors?

The sailors were afraid of such a powerful God of Heaven. Jonah surrendered to God by allowing the sailors to throw him overboard. The sailors called out to God to forgive them for throwing an innocent man overboard. They believed in God and had great respect for Him after the waters became calm.

5. What did Jonah's refusal cost him and the others around him?
- Jonah almost lost his life. The sailors lost their cargo and almost their ship.

6. What do you think was the turning point for Jonah?

When he was in the belly of the fish he offered up a prayer. (Read Jonah's full prayer in chapter 2)

7. What was the end result for the people of Nineveh? How did Jonah feel about this result?

The people were not destroyed, and they had a renewed relationship with God. Jonah chapter four shows us that Jonah was not happy, but rather very angry.

8. Why do you think God gave Nineveh a second chance? Do you think they deserved this?

(Answers vary) God is indeed merciful and full of grace, because He does not give people what we deserve. He is patient and gives them many chances to repent. He also said that the Ninevites could not tell right from wrong, which is why He sent Jonah.

9. Why do you think God gave Jonah a second chance? Do you think he deserved this second chance?

(Answers vary- maybe because (1) we all need second chances, particularly when we are repentant (2) the people of Nineveh needed to hear about God's anger.)

- *Challenging*

1. What did God want Jonah to do? What was Jonah's response? Why Tarshish? Why did he respond this way?

He wanted him to preach to the people of Nineveh that they would be punished by God for their wickedness. Jonah responded by trying to go to Tarshish. Tarshish was as far as he could go in the opposite direction.

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5.1 Jonah flees God

Jonah did not want God to be merciful to the people of Nineveh because they greatly oppressed his people.

2. What did God do to make Jonah go back? What did Jonah tell the sailors? God caused a violent storm to force the ship back. Jonah told the sailors that he was running away from God. He told them that he was the cause of the storm, and that they should throw him overboard.

3. These sailors would most likely have been Phoenicians (modern day Lebanon), not Israelites. How did God use the storm to bless the sailors? Genesis 12:1-3 says that God would use Abraham's descendants to bless all the families of the earth. Do you think the sailors considered themselves blessed?

The sailors believed in God after the waters became calm. Even though all their cargo was lost, their lives were saved, and they had witnessed a miracle in the calming of the storm. And they learned that God was just and that He cared for them.

4. What did Jonah's refusal cost him and the others around him? Had Jonah been indifferent to that cost?

Jonah almost lost his life. The sailors lost their cargo and almost their ship. Jonah had asked the sailors to throw him overboard to save them and their ship.

5. What do you think was the turning point for Jonah?

When he was in the belly of the fish he offered up a prayer. (Read Jonah chapter 2)

6. Why do you think God gave Jonah and the Ninevites a second chance? Will He always give us a second chance if we refuse to carry out His purposes for Him?

(Answers vary- maybe because (1) we all need second chances, particularly when we are repentant (2) the people of Nineveh needed to hear about God's anger because they could not tell right from wrong (3) God is merciful, patient and full of grace by His divine nature. If we are not repentant, He may choose to use someone else for the task and we will miss out on a potential blessing. In the story of Esther, Mordecai told Esther that if she would not act to save her people, God would choose someone else to act, and she would be killed.

7. What was the end result for the people of Nineveh? The Bible tells us that Jonah was not happy with this result. Does this surprise you?

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5.1 Jonah flees God

The people were not destroyed, and they had a renewed relationship with God. The great storm, the loss of the ship's cargo, and the time in the belly of the fish (Eww, gross!) changed Jonah's attitude to God, but not his attitude to his enemies. Jonah was only human, and a product of his time and experiences. The Assyrians were incredibly cruel; it would indeed have been hard for Jonah to forgive them.

8. **Matthew 5:43-44** says, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." How easy is it to love your enemy? Why does God ask this of us?

It is not easy to love your enemies. God told us to do this because we are to be His children and Jesus died for his enemies. What God commands, He also enables us to do by His power. We cannot do this in our own strength, which keeps us dependent on God.

9. The Bible also says that God continued to work on Jonah until Jonah did repent of his attitude. **Philippians 1:6** says "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." What does this tell you about God?

Answers will vary here. God's ways are not our ways. God loved His enemies, He sent Jonah to the Ninevites. He sent prophets to the Israelites over and over again. He kept working on Jonah to make him a better person, and He will keep working on us.

10. **What similarities do you see between God in the story of Jonah, and Jesus?**

Both instantly calmed the storm. Both were concerned for the Gentiles. God continued to work with Jonah despite his failures. Jesus continued to work with his disciples despite their failures.

Paul, out of Antioch

Acts 13

Background: Why the people of Lystra thought Barnabas and Paul were Zeus and Hermes

In Greek mythology, Zeus was the supreme ruler of the gods, and lord of the sky and rain. He governed over the spiritual world and the natural world. He watched over the welfare of mortals with tenderness, wisdom, and mercy. But he hurled thunderbolts at those who displeased him. The Romans called him Jupiter (Jove).

Hermes was a son of Zeus, and a messenger of the gods. He was an eloquent speaker. He was the protector of roads and travellers. The Romans called him Mercury.

The Greeks believed that the Greek gods would disguise themselves and walk along the roads and cities and interact with people. They could either bless these people or kill them.

Zeus and Hermes were Greek gods that were well known to the Gentiles of Lystra. The city of Lystra had a temple to Zeus, and several inscriptions dedicated to Zeus. In their local culture, they pictured Zeus as an elderly man with a beard, accompanied by a younger Hermes.

It could be that Barnabas was much older than Paul. So Barnabas and Paul fit their understanding of what Zeus and Hermes would look like, and act like. They rushed to offer them appropriate worship - perhaps for fear that they would otherwise be killed by them.

This would be blasphemous to Barnabas and Paul. The Bible says they tore their clothes when they realized that the people of Lystra were getting ready to make sacrifices to them and worship them. Nevertheless, Paul took the opportunity to start talking with them about who God is - they were pagans and didn't know the first thing about God, let alone Jesus.

Paul and Barnabas were unable to go any further with the people of Lystra, because the persecutors arrived and stirred up a mob. The Bible says that the Gentiles of Lystra joined with the unbelieving Jews to stone them. It could be that some of these Gentiles who hurled stones had seen the healing of the lame man, and shortly before were about to worship Barnabas and Saul.

The Roman Empire and Spread of the Gospel

The wars among the many rulers of the Middle East had caused Jews to leave Judea and scatter throughout Africa, the Middle East, Anatolia (Turkey) and Europe. The Roman Empire had brought peace and stability to this troubled region. Jewish believers fleeing persecution in Jerusalem and Judea naturally went to places where there were other Jewish communities such as Antioch, Syria, which was the largest Jewish centre outside of Judea. With Roman roads, and Roman law and order, the believers could travel and work peacefully anywhere in the Roman Empire, from the Persian Gulf to the north Atlantic. Wherever these believers went, they brought the gospel with them.

Before You Read:

1. What is the best news anyone ever gave you?

This question is to get students thinking about the excitement of 'Good News' and get some empathy for the Gentiles in Acts. 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

Choose the best answer:

1. The words 'Christ' and 'Messiah' mean ...
 - a. The one who prophets said God would send to save people from sin
 - b. the same thing in different languages
 - c. all of the above
2. Governor Sergius Paulus wanted to hear Paul and Barnabas because...
 - a. Elymas said they were interesting
 - b. The governor was a smart man who wanted to know about God
 - c. Paul and Barnabas were friendly to him.

Chapter Five: Spreading the Message

5.2 Paul, out of Antioch

3. Paul told the Jews in Psidian Antioch that...
 - a. his message was only for the Jews
 - b. the Law of Moses could set them free
 - c. none of the above
4. Almost everyone in Psidian Antioch...
 - a. came to hear more from Paul
 - b. believed what Paul said about Jesus
 - c. all of the above
5. When Paul and Barnabas spoke about Jesus...
 - a. only Jews believed
 - b. only Gentiles believed
 - c. some Jews and Gentiles believed
6. In most places that Paul and Barnabas visited they...
 - a. were almost killed
 - b. faced persecution
 - c. only spoke to Gentiles

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

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| __c__ 1. Gentiles | a. good news (about Jesus) |
| __f__ 2. persecution | b. someone dishonest |
| __a__ 3. gospel | c. people who were not Jews |
| __g__ 4. witchcraft | d. sentenced to die |
| __b__ 5. crook | e. resentful |
| __h__ 6. mist | f. very bad treatment |
| __d__ 7. condemned | g. using evil magic |
| __e__ 8. jealous | h. fog |

Fill in the blanks in the sentences below using words from above.

1. Elymas practiced ___witchcraft___ and was a liar, so Paul called him a ___crook___. God punished him by covering his eyes with a ___mist___.

Chapter Five: Spreading the Message

5.2 Paul, out of Antioch

2. Paul said that faith in Jesus could set people free from their sins. This was the ___gospel___ , for both Jews and for ___Gentiles___ .
3. The prophets said that the Messiah would be ___condemned___ because people would not realize who he was.
4. When some of the Jews saw the big crowd, they felt ___jealous___ and Paul faced ___persecution___ from them.

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 did the first believers tell *Gentiles* about Jesus?
They told the *Gentiles* in Antioch of Syria.
2. What did the Holy Spirit tell the church in Antioch?
To set apart Paul and Barnabas for a specific work God wanted them to do. This probably meant that the church should fund this journey and pray for the two and the work they would do.
3. What other ways did the Holy Spirit act during Paul and Barnabas' travels?
The Holy Spirit filled Paul when he faced Elymas and showed Paul what to do about him. The Holy Spirit filled those who had faith in Jesus after they heard Paul in Psidian Antioch. (The Holy Spirit gives power to be bold, even in the face of opposition and persecution.)
4. What kind of man was Elymas?
He was someone who practiced witchcraft, and he was dishonest. (That's why Paul called him a crook.) He probably liked power and influence, since he had a position with the governor. He was jealous of Paul's influence with Sergius Paulus as evidenced by his trying to keep the governor from believing Paul.
5. Why did Governor Sergius Paulus believe in the Lord Jesus?
He was likely already interested in the God of the Jews, since he had invited Paul and Barnabas to come. Perhaps he had heard something about the Jewish God from Elymas, but Elymas' magic was no match for the power

Chapter Five: Spreading the Message

5.2 Paul, out of Antioch

of God. When Paul boldly put Elymas in his place, the governor recognized the truth and power of Jesus Christ.

6. **What did Paul say about the teachings of the prophets and God's promises?**
He said that God had promised someone from David's family would save the people. He said that person was Jesus. He said that the prophets taught about the Messiah - that he would be condemned. He said that the unbelieving Jews of Jerusalem rejected what the prophets had to say.
7. **Why did many of the Jewish leaders and teachers reject Jesus?**
They did not realize who Jesus was because they did not understand the scriptures they read each Sabbath.
The Jewish leaders who heard Paul were jealous that the Gentiles were responding with enthusiasm. Perhaps they felt threatened that they would lose their place as God's people if the Messiah had been sent to Gentiles as well.
Also, the Jewish leaders had their own narrative about what the Messiah should be like and should do. They thought the Messiah would be concerned with Roman occupation or would free Israel from it. And the desire to be free from Rome was trending at the time, so they got a lot of popular support for these teachings.
8. **How did Greeks in Lystra react when Paul and Barnabas healed the lame man? What did Paul and Barnabas say to them?**
They thought they were Greek gods. (The Bible says that they thought Barnabas was Zeus, and Paul was Hermes.) Paul and Barnabas told them that they were just ordinary men, and the power to heal the lame man had come from God, not them.
9. **What did you learn about Paul in this story?**
Paul is a strong speaker. He knows the Scriptures well. He is a good teacher: to the Jews he gives one type of message appropriate to the Jews; to the Gentiles he gives a different type of message appropriate to the Gentiles. He is committed to the young churches, and visits each of the cities where he preached again - even though he knows that is dangerous to do.
10. **What did you learn about God's plans in this story?**
God is moving the gospel out to the world; here to Europe. He is also moving it out into the Gentile world (the Gentiles in Syrian Antioch, the Greeks in

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5.2 Paul, out of Antioch

Lystra); a paradigm shift. He keeps bringing the gospel to the Jews as well; He has not turned His back on them.

- *Intermediate*

1. **What was the role of the Holy Spirit in this story?**

The Spirit tells the church in Antioch, Syria, to set apart Paul and Barnabas (probably to have them fund their journey and support it in prayer). The Holy Spirit filled Paul when he faced Elymas and showed Paul what to do about him. The Holy Spirit filled those who had faith in Jesus after they heard Paul in Psidian Antioch. (The Holy Spirit gives power to be bold, even in the face of opposition and persecution.)

2. **What kind of man was Elymas?**

He was someone who practiced witchcraft, and he was dishonest. (That's why Paul called him a crook.) He probably liked power and influence, since he had a position with the governor. He was jealous of his influence with Sergius Paulus as evidenced by his trying to keep the governor from believing Paul.

3. **Why did Governor Sergius Paulus believe in the Lord Jesus?**

He was likely already interested in the God of the Jews, since he had invited Paul and Barnabas to come. Perhaps he had heard something about the Jewish God from Elymas, but Elymas' magic was no match for the power of God. When Paul boldly put Elymas in his place, the governor recognized the truth and power of the Lord Jesus.

4. **(You can read Paul's full sermon in Acts 13:16 - 41) What did Paul teach about the prophets to the people in Antioch, Pisidia? What did he tell them about Jesus?**

He said that they taught about the Messiah - who He would be, what He would do, and what would happen to him. He told them that Jesus had fulfilled all these prophecies. He said the unbelieving Jews of Jerusalem rejected what the prophets said, even though they heard them taught in their synagogues.

5. **Why did many of the Jewish leaders and teachers reject Jesus?**

They had their own narrative about what the Messiah should be like and should do. It wasn't in the Scriptures that the Messiah would be concerned with Roman occupation, or free Israel from Rome. But they believed their

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5.2 Paul, out of Antioch

own ideas were equal to the Scriptures. And the hope of freedom from Rome was trending at the time, so they got a lot of support. Jesus did not preach against Rome, but he did preach against their having elevated themselves above Scripture.

The Jewish leaders who heard Paul were jealous that the Gentiles were responding with enthusiasm. Perhaps they felt threatened that they would lose their place as God's people if the Messiah had been sent to Gentiles as well.

6. In Lystra, Paul and Barnabas healed a lame man.

a. How did the Greeks in Lystra react when the man was healed?

They thought they were Greek Gods. (The Bible says that they thought Barnabas was Zeus, and Paul was Hermes.)

b. What did Paul and Barnabas say to them?

They told them to not do this. They told them that they were ordinary men. They told them that the power to heal the lame man came from God, not from them.

c. What misunderstandings might happen if two men healed like that today where you live? In your first country? (Answers vary)

7. What did you learn about Paul in this story?

Paul is a strong speaker. He knows the Scriptures well. He is a good teacher; he gives one type of message appropriate to the Jews; to the Gentiles he gives a different type of message appropriate to the Gentiles. He is committed to the young churches, and visits each of the cities where he preached again - even though he knows that is dangerous to do.

8. What did you learn about God's plans in this story?

God is moving the gospel out to the world; here to the Roman province of Galatea, which is mostly modern-day Turkey. He is also moving it out to the Gentiles (the Gentiles in Syrian Antioch, the Greeks in Lystra); a paradigm shift. He keeps bringing the gospel to the Jews as well; He has not turned His back on them.

• *Challenging*

1. From the time of Abraham, the entire region of the Middle East and Asia Minor (Turkey) had been wracked with warfare as one superpower warred with the next: Hittites; Egyptians; Assyrians; Babylonians; Persians;

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5.2 Paul, out of Antioch

Macedonians, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids; then Rome. Galatians 4:4 says, "But when the appropriate time had come, God sent out his Son...". Why was the 1st century during the Roman Empire the appropriate time for the spread of the gospel?

The Romans brought peace and security from war, so people had the time and peace to listen to messages (as opposed to constantly fleeing the next army). They had roads that people could travel on, without fear of robbers. Rome was a huge empire, so believers could bring the gospel anywhere in that empire and still be in Rome (no immigration visas or work permits needed) and be protected as a Roman citizen.

2. The Bible says that it was Jewish believers from Cyprus and Cyrene who were the first to intentionally spread the gospel to Gentiles in Syrian Antioch. Why did they choose Antioch, Syria to start this work? Why might God have not chosen the church leaders in Jerusalem for this work?

They were not from Jerusalem, where the church had started. (So the gospel had already spread to these regions, through the believers who were fleeing the persecutions in Jerusalem.) In that sense, they were already second-generation believers, yet they were doing the work of evangelism. They were preaching intentionally to the Gentiles before the church in Jerusalem did.

Antioch was a large Jewish centre and the capital of Syria. They would have the infrastructure of Old Testament teaching there from the Jews, on which they could build the gospel. (They didn't have to start from scratch with the concept of there being only one God, nor with what He was like. They could use the Scriptures with people who knew the Scriptures.) God calls everyone to do His work, not just the leaders. Through the Holy Spirit, He equips everyone. In this way, the gospel could spread rapidly.

3. How would Barnabas and Paul have known for sure that they were to leave for Asia (modern Turkey)?

The church in Antioch, Syria, was fasting, worshipping, and praying when the Holy Spirit told them to set aside Barnabas and Paul. So, in the same way they must have discerned God's leading to Asia. Also, Barnabas was from Cyprus and so would have known that area well. And Saul was from Tarsus which was in Cilicia, Asia (Turkey) so would have some familiarity with Asia. And both were Roman citizens, so they could travel freely through Asia. And Greek was a common language (because the area had been part of the Greek Empire.)

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5.2 Paul, out of Antioch

4. (Read Paul's full sermon in Acts 13:16 - 41) Paul and Barnabas taught in the synagogue in Antioch, Psidia.

- a. What did Paul teach the people about the prophets?

He taught that they had prophesied about what the Messiah would be like, what He would do. And that Jesus had fulfilled these prophecies.

- b. Why did he talk about Moses as well?

Moses had also prophesied about the Messiah. But Paul's main point here is to show that the Mosaic law could not bring salvation from sins. So there was need of the Messiah to do this.

- c. Why did he talk about David?

David had prophesied about the Messiah. And the Messiah was to be called the Son of David. Though David was Israel's hero, he had died. Jesus didn't die, showing that He was greater than David.

5. Why did many of the Jewish leaders and teachers in Psidian Antioch reject Jesus? What did Paul and Barnabas tell them?

They had their own narrative about what the Messiah should be like and should do. It wasn't in the Scriptures that the Messiah would be concerned with Roman occupation, or freeing Israel from it. But they believed their own ideas were equal to the Scriptures. And hope for freedom from Rome was trending at the time, so they got a lot of support. Jesus did not preach against Rome, but he did preach against their having elevated themselves above Scripture.

Paul and Barnabas were very blunt. They told them that they since they rejected the salvation that was offered to them - therefore saying they were unworthy of it - they would bring the gospel to the Gentiles.

6. How did the Greeks in Lystra react when Paul and Barnabas healed the lame man? What did Paul and Barnabas say to them? How do you think they would react to this?

The people of Lystra thought they were Greek Gods. (The Bible says that they thought Barnabas was Zeus, and Paul was Hermes.) Paul and Barnabas told them that they were just ordinary men, and the power to heal the lame man had come from Jesus, not them. Paul talks with them about God, rather than about Jesus, showing that these people weren't familiar with the concept of the God of the Bible yet. They didn't have the chance to go any further with them, since the unbelieving Jews of Antioch and Iconium arrived to stir up a mob.

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5.2 Paul, out of Antioch

7. How did Paul describe Elymas? How did Elymas' practice of witchcraft fit into Paul's description of him? What else might you guess about Elymas from this passage?

Paul called Elymas a son of the devil, a liar, a crook and an enemy of everything that is right. His practice of witchcraft fits the name 'son of the devil' and 'enemy of everything that is right', since he went to God's enemy for power. Though he was a Jew, he ignored God's law against witchcraft - a capital offense.

Elymas probably was attracted to power and enjoyed his influence with the governor. He seemed jealous of his influence with Sergius Paulus as evidenced by his trying to keep the governor from believing Paul. He was a blind guide, so the punishment fit the crime.

8. Why do you think Sergius Paulus believed in the Lord Jesus so quickly?

The governor was likely already interested in the God of the Jews, since he had invited Paul and Barnabas to come. God had probably been preparing his heart ahead of time. Perhaps he had heard something about the Jewish God from Elymas, but Elymas' occult tricks were no match for the power of the Living God. When Paul boldly put Elymas in his place, the governor recognized the truth and power of the Lord Jesus.

9. What did you learn about Paul in this story?

Paul is a strong speaker. He knows the Scriptures well. He is a good teacher, to the Jews he gives one type of message appropriate to the Jews; to the Gentiles he gives a different type of message appropriate to the Gentiles. He is committed to the young churches, and visits each of the cities where he preached again - even though he knows that is dangerous to do.

10. Why is this a pivotal point in God's plans for His people?

God is reaching out to the Gentiles through these Jewish believers and teachers. And He is bringing knowledge of Himself to the Gentile world, to the entire world. He is establishing churches, rather than using only the Temple; there is no longer just one place to worship. There is no longer a division between Jew and Gentile.

Paul, into Europe

Acts 16-17

Background: Conclusion of Paul's second missionary journey, and his third missionary journey

Conclusion of Paul's second missionary journey: Acts 17-18

Athens: In Athens Paul was invited by the Athenians to present his message in the Areopagus (Mars Hill) the meeting place of the highest court in Greece. There, topics in philosophy, religion, and law were presented and discussed. He started his presentation with God as the creator of men and nations, then went on to His closeness, their need for repentance, the judgment, and the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Corinth: He then moved on to Corinth where he met with fellow tentmakers Priscilla and Aquila. Unbelieving Jews brought him to court charging that he was persuading people to become Christians, contrary to the law (Roman law forbade the creation of new religions). But the Roman judge resented the Jews (because of Judean rebellion towards Roman rule) and threw the case out. The people then beat the leader of these unbelieving Jews who brought Paul to court. But Paul must have shown compassion for him, because he later became a convert.

Ephesus: Paul went back to Asia, to Ephesus in Lydia. Priscilla and Aquila who had become believers by then travelled with him and stayed in Ephesus. Paul went on to visit the churches in Asia that he had established on his first missionary journey. Then he returned to the church in Antioch, Syria.

Paul's third missionary journey and imprisonment Acts 18-28

Ephesus: Acts doesn't give the full account of the beginnings of this journey. It opens with Paul finding believers in Ephesus who had not yet heard of the Holy Spirit. Paul taught them and laid hands on them and they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Paul performed many miracles there. It was here that some unbelieving Jewish exorcists attempted to drive out evil spirits in Jesus' name, but the spirits attacked them. Because of this, many magicians burned their books of magic. These books were gilded with a lot of silver. Demetrius, a silversmith, led his fellow tradesmen to create a riot in the city against the Christians, shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!". But the town clerk settled them down.

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5.3 Paul, into Europe

Paul then returned to visit the churches in Macedonia and Greece. A plot against him from unbelieving Jews caused him to leave for Troas in Asia.

Troas: In Troas, a young believer, Eutychus, fell asleep while listening to one of Paul's messages that went late into the night - and fell out a third-floor window and died. Paul raised him back to life, then continued teaching until daybreak.

Paul left Asia, saying the Spirit had bound him to go to Jerusalem. He warned the believers against false teachers. On the way to Jerusalem, he stopped in Tyre to look up the disciples there. Then they travelled on to Caesarea where the prophet Agabus warned Paul that he would be taken away by the Gentiles.

Jerusalem: In Jerusalem, Paul gave the church leaders there a full report of what God was doing among the Gentiles. They asked him to take four Christian Jews to the Temple for purification rites, for the Christian Jews still wanted to maintain Jewish customs and practices. The Christian Jews of Jerusalem were concerned that Paul was teaching believing Jews to abandon Moses and not circumcise their children, and to ignore Jewish customs. (Paul wrote he observed those customs when he was with Jews in order to win the Jews; he did not observe them when he was with Gentiles, in order to win the Gentiles (1 Cor. 9).)

While in the Temple, Jews from Asia stirred up the people there by accusing Paul of defiling the Temple by taking a Gentile into the Temple past the court of the Gentiles (which was expressly forbidden). Paul was rescued from them by Roman soldiers. Paul asked the soldiers if he could speak to the people, and they allowed him to, probably in the hope that he could calm the uproar. Paul then gave a defense of his faith to those Jews in the Temple (he spoke in Hebrew). But they responded with fury when he said that God sent him to the Gentiles. The Roman soldiers did not know Hebrew, so they did not know why he had upset the crowd. So, they took him into custody to find out.

The next day there was a hearing about the accusations against him from the Sanhedrin. Paul realized that these Jews were interested only in having him sentenced to death. The Sanhedrin had both Sadducees and Pharisees in it; Paul said he was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee and that he was on trial because of the hope and resurrection of the dead. This caused a fight between the Pharisees (who believed in the resurrection) and the Sadducees (who did not believe in the resurrection.) The Roman soldiers then pulled Paul out of there, fearing for his life

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5.3 Paul, into Europe

and put him in prison for his own safety. Jesus said to Paul that night, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

Forty of the Jews who opposed Paul realized that there wasn't evidence of Paul doing wrong, so they hatched a plot to ask for another hearing with Paul, and so have the Romans bring him out to this hearing - and then they would assassinate him en route. But Paul's nephew heard of the plot and warned the Romans. So, the Romans moved Paul at night, under a guard of 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen, from Jerusalem to Caesarea. There he would be tried by the governor of Judea. The Roman commander sent a letter along to the governor telling what happened and saying that they found Paul innocent of any charge against him that deserved imprisonment or death.

The high priest, Ananias (who was known for corruption), elders, and an orator (lawyer) came to Caesaria to bring their charges against Paul to the Roman governor of Judea, Felix. They again charged that Paul had defiled the Temple. Then Paul gave his defence that he had not done so, and that there was no evidence of his having done so. Then Paul explained his ministry and how that was the issue that had upset the Jews. Felix deferred the case and left Paul in custody for two years to please the Jews (who were rebelling against Roman rule) and to prompt Paul to give him a bribe. (Felix was known to be an unrighteous man.) During that time, Felix sent for Paul and had him present his faith to him and his wife Drusilla (who was Jewish and a daughter of Herod Agrippa I and the granddaughter of Herod the Great. She was also sister to Herod Agrippa II and Bernice.) Paul preached boldly to them about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.

The next governor of Judea was Festus. The high priest and leaders then came to Festus and asked him for a favour - to send Paul to Jerusalem for a hearing - but they were planning to ambush him on the way and kill him. But Festus said no to them, that he would re-open the trial in Caesarea. The high priest and leaders went to Caesarea and brought false charges against Paul again. Paul defended himself. Festus asked Paul if he were willing to go back to Jerusalem, but Paul used his rights as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar, that is to be tried in Rome. It was the right of Roman citizens to request that their case be heard by Caesar himself (a sort of Supreme Court that they could go to if initial trials failed.)

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5.3 Paul, into Europe

Festus was Roman and unfamiliar with Jewish affairs, so he spoke of the case to King Agrippa (Herod Agrippa II) and his sister, Bernice of Chalcis (a region west of the Jordan and north of the Decapolis) who were visiting Festus. (They were the son and daughter (brother and sister) of Herod Agrippa I, and grandchildren of Herod the Great. They were also incestuous lovers.) Agrippa did know Jewish customs and had been given the right by the emperor to oversee the Temple and the appointment of the high priest.

Agrippa asked to hear Paul's message. Paul told him of his having been raised as a Pharisee, of his former zealous persecution of believers, his conversion on the road to Damascus, and of his hope in Jesus and the resurrection, and of Jesus' commission to him to preach to the Gentiles. Paul tells Agrippa that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the prophets and Moses. Then he told Agrippa why the Jews had seized him in the Temple.

Festus told Paul that he was crazy. Paul told Agrippa that he knew that he (Agrippa) believed the prophets. Agrippa replied that Paul "almost" persuaded him but he rejected the gospel. Agrippa said that Paul is innocent, and says that Paul could have been set free, had he not requested to go to Caesar for trial in Rome.

Rome: Paul is then sent to Rome by ship. One ship he was on was caught in a storm for two weeks, then shipwrecked on the reefs off Malta. Paul told the sailors that God would bring them all safely to shore. On shore, when Paul gathered wood for a fire, he was bitten by a viper. The people on the island thought this was a sign that Paul must be a murderer, and this was God's justice. But when Paul shook the viper off into the fire, and was unharmed, they started saying that he must be a god. Paul healed several people on the island.

After overwintering on Malta, they sailed for Rome. There he was put under house arrest. The Christians could come and visit with him there. Paul spoke to the Jews there about what had happened in Jerusalem. Then the Jews in Rome asked Paul to tell them what he believed about Jesus. Some came to faith; others didn't. He told them that God has sent this faith to the Gentiles and they would listen.

The book of Acts ends there. Paul stayed under house arrest for two years in Rome but was allowed to preach the gospel freely. The Bible says that the gospel spread to Caesar's household. He was released from Roman prison and allowed to resume missionary work. He expressed his desire to visit Spain and one of his

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contemporaries, Clemens Romanus, said he had travelled to "the extremity of the west."

During these times the Great Fire in Rome occurred, and Nero blamed it on the Christians, and major persecution of the Christians began. The Jews began intensifying their revolt against Rome. The church in Rome suffered much persecution under Nero.

Paul was imprisoned again; the Bible does not state why. He was sentenced to death and probably beheaded (the death penalty for Roman citizens) under the reign of Nero. This was about 66 AD - before the Temple was destroyed by Titus in Roman retaliation for the Jewish rebellion of 66-70 AD. (At the time Bernice, the incestuous sister of Agrippa II, was Titus' lover.) It is thought that Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews before he died, and that in it he was preparing the Jewish believers for the loss of the Temple and the Mosaic rituals connected with it. Hebrews says that the law was fulfilled in Christ (Heb. 7:26-8:7; Matt 5:17-20).

It is thought that Peter was also teaching in Rome at the time of Paul's death. And that Peter concealed where he was by calling Rome as Babylon.

Before You Read:

1. What keeps you going when life is hard?

This question is to get students thinking about Paul and Silas's hard times and what kept them going. 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. Barnabas and Paul travelled together again. ___F___
 2. Paul and his friends traveled into Bithynia. ___F___

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3. Both Jews and Gentiles persecuted Paul and Silas. T
4. The slave girl could tell the future by God's Spirit. F
5. Lydia already knew about God when she met Paul. T
6. The Bereans checked to see if Paul was telling the truth. T

Match the word with its meaning.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <u> c </u> 1. begging | a. the strongest part of a building below the ground |
| <u> f </u> 2. vision | b. beat using leather or cord |
| <u> a </u> 3. foundations | c. strongly requesting |
| <u> g </u> 4. Sabbath | d. a large crowd of people who are angry and difficult to control |
| <u> b </u> 5. whipped | e. against |
| <u> d </u> 6. mob | f. a picture you see in your mind |
| <u> h </u> 7. chains | g. the Jewish day of worship |
| <u> e </u> 8. opposed | h. metal rings joined together for holding a prisoner's hands or feet |

Use the words above to fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

1. An angry mob told officials that Christians break the law of the Roman emperor.
2. If a building has good foundations it will last for a long time.
3. Paul and Silas preached to people during worship on the Sabbath .
4. Paul saw the Macedonian man begging him to come in a vision .
5. In Philippi, officials arrested Paul and Silas, then they were whipped and put in chains .
6. Some of the Jews and Gentiles opposed Paul in Thessalonica.

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 were Paul and Silas not able to preach in other regions of Asia?
The Holy Spirit would not let them speak.
2. Where is Macedonia? Why did Paul decide to go there?
It was in eastern Europe, across the Aegean Sea from Asia Minor (Turkey).
3. Who was Lydia?
She was a Jewish woman who was worshipping God by the riverside in Philippi when Paul and Silas came to witness. She was from Thyatira, Mysia.
4. How did the slave-girl know who Paul and Silas were?
She had an evil spirit in her that could tell her these things.
5. Why do you think Paul commanded the spirit to come out of her?
She was annoying him. And he did not want "help" from a demon. He may also have felt sorry for the girl.
6. Why did the jailor believe in God? Who in his family believed?
He must have been listening to Paul and Silas praying and singing hymns. Paul saved him from killing himself when he called out to let him know that the prisoners were still there. So, the jailor wanted what Paul and Silas had. Everyone in his family believed.
7. What accusation did the unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica make against Christians, including Paul and Silas?
They said Christians broke the laws of the emperor because they claimed a new King Jesus.
8. Luke said the Berean Jews were much nicer people. Why did he think this?
They looked up everything Paul said in the Scriptures to see if what he said was true or not. They kept their minds open to the truth.
9. In each of these three cities, Paul and Silas went to preach in the synagogues. Why did they do this when they knew it would bring persecution?

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5.3 Paul, into Europe

They valued spreading the gospel, the work God called them to do, more than the suffering they would get from their persecutors.

- *Intermediate*

1. **Why do you think the Holy Spirit kept Paul and Silas from preaching in other regions of Asia during this journey?**

It looks as if he kept them moving until they got where He wanted them to be - in the port city of Troas across from Macedonia. Paul and Silas probably intended to only plant churches in Asia (Turkey) before returning to the church in Antioch, Syria. That would have taken up all their time and money.

2. **Why did Paul believe he should go to Macedonia?**

He saw a vision of the Macedonian man asking him to come and help his people. He got this vision while he was in a port across from Macedonia. And the Spirit had closed all further work in Asia.

3. **Why did Paul and Silas go to the riverside in Philippi?**

They were looking for Jewish worshippers there because it was the Sabbath. The city of Philippi must have had too small of a Jewish population to have a synagogue, so Paul knew they would go to the river.

4. **Who made Lydia accept the good news about Jesus?**

God had already prepared Lydia to believe. She already worshipped the Lord God, and she just needed more information to accept that Jesus was the Messiah from God and was God.

5. **Why do you think Paul cast out the demon from the slave-girl? Is all fortune telling wrong? Why or why not?**

It was annoying to have the girl following around them and calling attention to them. Paul didn't want any "help" from someone who was demon possessed. He probably wanted to follow the Spirit's leading on who to talk with. Her unwanted attention might attract the wrong type of person. He may also have felt sorry for the girl.

Demons are God's enemies. That is why God clearly forbids fortune telling. (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). *Note that this is a common practice in many Asian cultures.*

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5.3 Paul, into Europe

6. Why do you think the jailor wanted to be saved? What do you learn about Roman law and order here?

He must have been listening to Paul and Silas praying and singing hymns. Paul saved him from killing himself when he called out to let him know that the prisoners were still there. So, the jailor wanted what Paul and Silas had.

Roman law and order was there for Roman citizens, but those without citizenship could be beaten and jailed without trial. And it was a harsh law, the jailor would rather commit suicide than face the punishment for the prisoners having escaped on his watch.

7. The mob in Thessalonica did not find Paul or Silas when they went to the believer Jason's house. Why do you think the believers still sent them away the same night?

From the context of the Scripture, it appears that Paul and Silas were staying at Jason's home, but were not there at the time of the attack. So they would still have been in danger from those who had attacked Jason and the other believers. And this may have also brought further attacks on the believers.

8. The Bible says the Bereans were 'much nicer'. Why would the writer Luke say this? Do you think it's important to do what they did? Why or why not? They tested everything that Paul taught by searching out what the Scriptures said. Only then would they believe. It's important to do this; the Bible tells us to test everything. This practice kept the Bereans safe from false teachers, and it will do the same for us.

9. Why does Paul keep preaching in the synagogues, when he knows this will bring persecution? How did God make use of this persecution?

Paul is intent on carrying out God's commission to spread the gospel. He is willing to suffer persecution for this. This persecution kept Paul and Silas on the move, so that they went to several towns. (Altogether on this trip they would go to Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Cenchreae, and Ephesus - 7 cities.)

- *Challenging*

1. Why do you think the Holy Spirit kept Paul and Silas from preaching in Asia during this journey? (In his next journey, Paul was able to return to Asia and preach there.)

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5.3 Paul, into Europe

It looks as if he kept them moving until they got where He wanted them to be - in the port city of Troas across from Macedonia. Paul and Silas probably intended to only plant churches in Asia (Turkey) before returning to the church in Antioch, Syria. That would have taken up all their time and money.

2. **Why did Paul believe he should go to Macedonia? What is a vision? How can you tell a vision from a daydream?**

He saw a vision of the Macedonian man asking him to come and help his people. He got this vision while he was in a port across from Macedonia. And the Spirit had closed all further work in Asia.

A vision is a vivid picture that reveals God's will or shows a prophecy. It can come in the day or at night. Daydreams are the product of your own imagination. You have to test the vision to make sure it's from God. Paul's vision glorified Jesus, was in accordance with the Scriptures, and was consistent with God's character.

3. **Why did Paul and Silas go to the riverside in Philippi?**

They were looking for Jewish worshippers there because it was the Sabbath. The city of Philippi must have had too small of a Jewish population to have a synagogue, so Paul knew they would go to the river.

4. **Why do you think Paul cast out the demon from the slave-girl? Is all fortune telling wrong? Why or why not? How is fortune telling different than prophecy?**

It was annoying to have the girl following around them and calling attention to them. Paul didn't want any "help" from someone who was demon possessed. He probably wanted to follow the Spirit's leading on who to talk with. Her unwanted attention might attract the wrong type of person. Paul may also have felt sorry for the girl.

Demons are God's enemies. That is why God clearly forbids fortune telling. (Deuteronomy 18:10-12 *Note that this is a common practice in many Asian cultures.*) Fortune telling is an alliance with God's enemies for the benefit of evil and those who serve evil. Prophecy is a gift given by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of His people and His purposes.

5. **The Jews in Jerusalem resisted Roman rule and refused to allow Roman emperor worship in Judea. How did those opposing Paul make use of this fact?**

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The Romans disliked the Jews for rebelling against them. Here the Gentile owners of the demon-possessed slave-girl tell the officials that Paul and Silas are Jews disrupting the peace and laws - they set them up for Roman anger.

6. Why do you think the jailor wanted to be saved? What do you learn about Roman law and order here?

He must have been listening to Paul and Silas praying and singing hymns. Paul saved him from killing himself when he called out to let him know that the prisoners were still there. So, the jailor wanted what Paul and Silas had.

Roman law and order was there for Roman citizens, but those without citizenship could be beaten and jailed without trial. And it was a harsh law, the jailor would rather commit suicide than face the punishment for the prisoners having escaped on his watch.

7. The officials of Thessalonica did not imprison Jason despite the charge that he was disrupting the city. Why do you think the believers still sent Paul and Silas away by boat the same night?

From the context of the Scripture, it appears that Paul and Silas were staying at Jason's home, but were not there at the time of the attack. So they would still have been in danger from those who had attacked Jason and the other believers. And this may have also brought further attacks on the believers.

8. The Bible says the Bereans were 'much nicer'. Why would the writer Luke say this? Do you think it's important to do what they did? Why or why not?

They tested everything that Paul taught by searching out what the Scriptures said. Only then would they believe. It's important to do this; the Bible tells us to test everything. This practice kept the Bereans safe from false teachers, and it will do the same for us.

9. In each of the three cities, Paul and Silas encountered persecution. How did God make use of this persecution?

This persecution kept Paul and Silas on the move, so that they went to several towns. (Altogether on this trip they would go to Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Cenchreae, and Ephesus - 7 cities.)

10. Why does Paul keep preaching in the synagogues, when he knows this will cause much opposition? In Romans 9:1-4, Paul wrote, "...I have great sorrow

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and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons...". What does this tell you about Paul's heart?

Paul is intent on carrying out God's commission to spread the gospel. He is willing to suffer persecution for this. He has a deep love and concern for his people. He has the heart and mind of God in this, for Jesus was willing to be cut off for our sakes when He took our sins on the cross.

11. Mark, Barnabas' cousin was young when he accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first journey. Mark deserted them when the going got tough, so Paul refused to take Mark with him on his second journey. But Barnabas took a chance on him again. Later Mark wrote one of the gospels and became a useful worker for Paul. In this story, you see Paul taking young Timothy along with his group. What do you learn from this?

Answers will vary. Here both Barnabas and Paul are modelling disciple making and building into the next generation. Barnabas has a greater sense of hope and forgiveness in the beginning, for he takes Mark with him at the cost of losing Paul's companionship and seeing the churches he helped plant in Asia. When Mark turns out well because of Barnabas' confidence in him, Paul learns that he can be wrong. Perhaps Paul was already realizing that when he took a chance with young Timothy.

