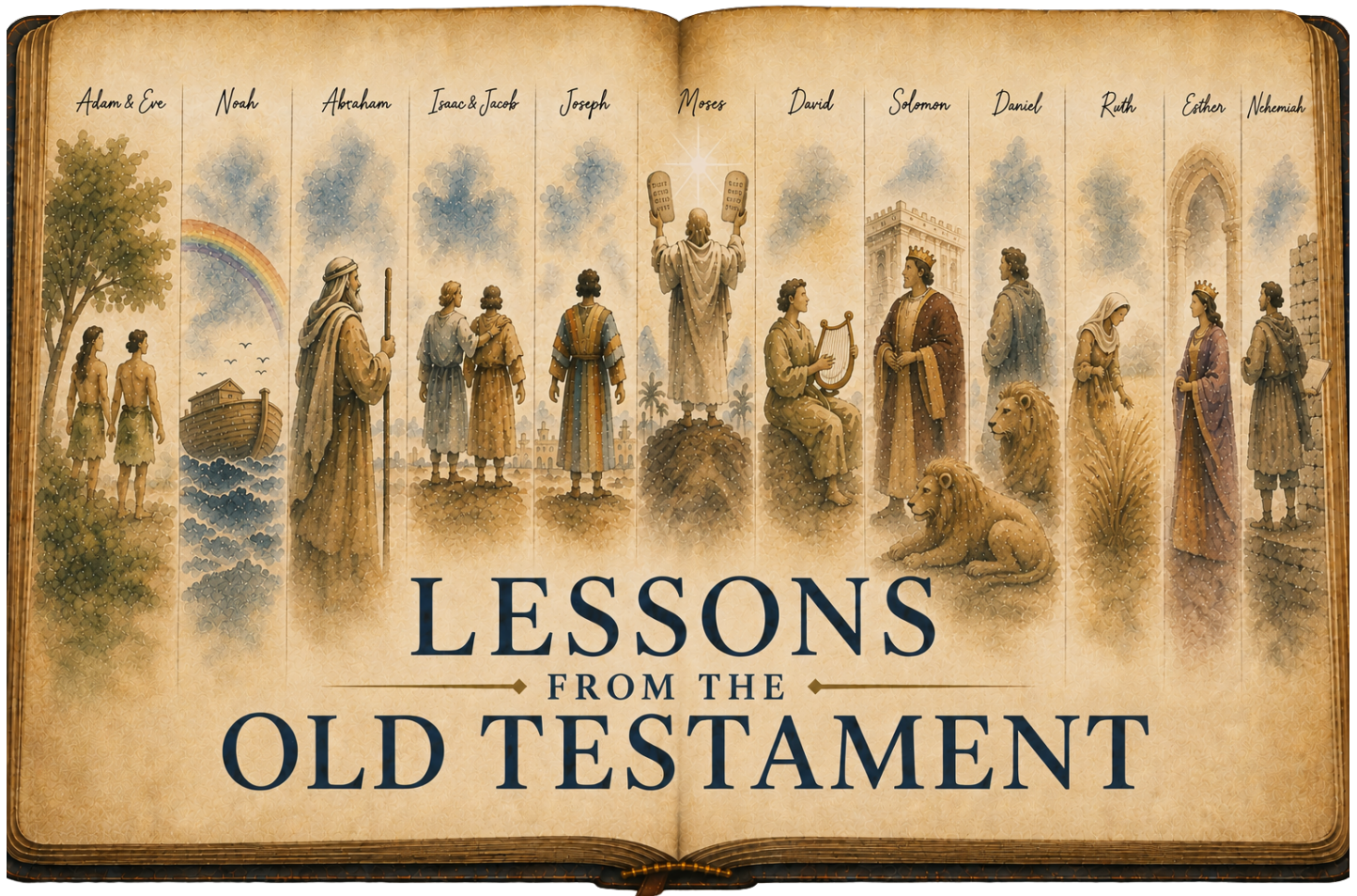




Foundation #20 –
Lessons from the Old Testament

Lessons from the Old Testament... Character Studies

9.6.26	Introduction to the Old Testament	p. 4	Pastor Jerry
9.13.26	Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah	p. 7	Pastor Jerry
9.20.26	Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob	p. 11	Pastor Mike
9.27.26	Joseph (part 1)	p. 15	Pastor Joe
10.4.26	Joseph (part 2) *Communion	p. 20	Pastor Joe
10.11.26	Moses	p. 26	Pastor Mike
10.18.26	David	p. 30	Pastor Mike
10.25.26	Solomon	p. 35	Pastor Joe
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11.8.26	Ruth and Esther	p. 41	Pastor Mike
11.15.26	Nehemiah	p. 46	Pastor Jerry
11.22.26	Review and Communion	p. 48	Pastor Jerry
11.29.26	NO 9:15 Service (Post-Thanksgiving Sunday)		

Theme Passage:

Romans 15:4 *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

The Apostle Paul made it clear that the Old Testament was recorded for a much greater purpose than information or interesting stories. We are to study the Old Testament with the understanding that GOD wants our personal lives to be spiritually enriched, primarily in the area of hope. Hope in Scripture isn't wishful thinking; it is a confidence that the GOD who has revealed Himself to us is worthy of our complete allegiance and obedience.

- Not all the Bible was written to us, but all the Bible was written for us. **2 Timothy 3:16**
- If we judge others, we should do so in the context of their generation, not our present generation.
- Scripture doesn't ignore the flaws and sins of those identified as GOD followers.

Lesson 1: An Introduction to the Old Testament

Big Idea: There is no greater, higher, more valuable information that can enter our fallen, finite minds than that which is found in Scripture, GOD's Word. David proclaimed that its value is greater than gold and for good reason. The insight that Scripture provides about the nature of humanity cannot be overstated or exaggerated. What an honor and privilege it is for us to study and learn from those who followed GOD during their era.

1. How many books make up the Old Testament? **39**
2. How many books make up the Pentateuch/Books of the Law/ Torah/Books of Moses ? **5**
3. How many history books? **12** (Joshua through Esther)
4. How many wisdom/poetry books? **5** (Job through Song of Solomon)
 - **Proverbs** is wisdom/poetic literature that includes the use of aphorism (afor-rism) and figurative language. An aphorism is a statement of a general truth or principle.
 - To say that some Proverbs are generally true is *not* to say that they are less inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - Generally true Proverbs are **valuable** to follow and apply.
 - We must interpret generally true Proverbs within the context of God's sovereign plan and our fallen world of disease, crime, war, and injustice.
5. How many major prophets? **5** (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel)
6. How many minor prophets? **12** (Hosea through Malachi)
7. How many chapters in the Old Testament? **929**
8. How many chapters in the New Testament? **260**

Key Dates: (estimates vary)

Noah	2500 BC
Joseph	1915 BC
Moses	1526 BC
David	1010 BC
Solomon	970 BC

Malachi, the last Book of the Old Testament, was written around 430 BC.

- **Malachi 4:-5-6** Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. ⁶And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

Kingdom Divides: 930 BC

Israel is the Northern Kingdom of 10 Tribes; Capital city, Samaria.

Taken into captivity by Assyria in 721 BC

Judah is the Southern Kingdom of 2 Tribes; Capital city, Jerusalem

Taken into captivity by **Babylon** in 606 BC

Daniel and Ezekiel taken into Babylonian captivity

→ A warning about **Marcionism**/Neo Marcionism:

Marcionism was a religious movement based on the teachings of the 2nd-century heretic Marcion. While none of Marcion's writings have survived to the present, we know of his teachings through several early Christian writers including Justin Martyr (AD 100–165), Irenaeus of Lyons (AD 130–200), and Hippolytus (AD 170–235). These men combatted Marcion in defense of the truth. **Marcion held to many errant views, but he is primarily known for his belief that the Old Testament Scriptures were not authoritative for a Christian. He denied that the God of the Old Testament was the same God presented in the New Testament.**

Re: gotquestions.org

→ **Tensions created as we read the Old Testament:**

1. The tensions are by Divine design to create humility and dependence in believers.
2. Absolutely, there are challenging issues within the Old Testament, but every worldview has difficult issues and pressing questions.
3. The root question is this: is GOD just?

Deuteronomy 32:3-4 *For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God.*

⁴He is the Rock, His work is perfect; For all His ways are justice,

A God of truth and without injustice;

Righteous and upright is He.

Deuteronomy 29:29 *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God,*

but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever,

that we may do all the words of this law.

Metanarrative of Scripture:



CREATION



FALL



REDEMPTION



GLORIFICATION

Approaching Bible Difficulties

When Critics Ask by Norman Geisler

- Presuming the Bible guilty until proven innocent
- Confusing fallible interpretations with infallible revelation
- Failing to understand the context of the passage
- Neglecting to interpret difficult passages in light of clear ones
- Forgetting the Bible is a human book with human characters
- Assuming that a partial report is a false report
- Demanding that the N.T. citations of the O.T. must always be exact quotations
- Assuming that divergent accounts are false ones
- Presuming that the Bible approves of all it records
- Forgetting that the Bible uses non-technical, everyday language
- Assuming that round numbers are false

Lesson 2: Creation, Adam and Eve, Noah

The first four words of Scripture... **In the beginning GOD...**

- It doesn't read that GOD had a beginning... in the beginning GOD **created**...
- GOD is self-existent
- GOD is self-sufficient
- GOD is eternal

Made in GOD's image means...

1. Humans have personality, knowledge, emotions, and a will.
2. Humans are eternal; therefore, they will live forever with or without GOD.
3. Humanity has freedom and therefore will be held accountable to GOD.
4. Humans are spiritual beings designed to worship GOD.

Genesis 1:26-31 *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹ And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. ³⁰ Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food"; and it was so. ³¹ Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

- | | |
|---|--------|
| → Trinitarian Creation | v26 |
| → Humanity given dominion over the animal kingdom (Psalm 8) | v27 |
| → Adam and Eve given instructions and commands | v28-30 |
| → Day six – very good | v31 |

Our latest GBC bylaws were adopted in February 2023; they were first adopted and voted on in 1994:

We teach that God creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, unchangeable genders together reflect the image and nature of God, and the rejection of one's biological gender is a rejection of the image of God within that person (Genesis 1:26-27).

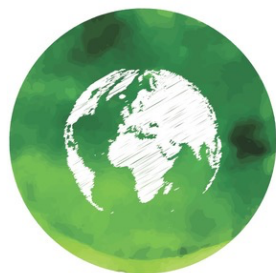
- This statement doesn't call for hatred or harm towards anyone who holds a different view... yet it is presented as hate speech by some.
- Like all claims in Scripture – this is either true or false.

Recommended resource: *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* – Rosaria Butterfield

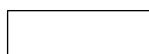
→ It was GOD—not ADAM—who said *"it is not good for man to be alone"*

Genesis 2:21-25 *And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. ²²Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. ²³And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*

- Severance *"shall leave his father and mother"*
- Permanence *"shall be joined to his wife"* (cleave – KJV)
- Unity *"and they shall be one flesh"*
- Intimacy *"they were both naked... and were not ashamed"*



CREATION



REDEMPTION



GLORIFICATION

Where **doubt** is present, **deception** is not far away. Deception opens the door for **disobedience**.

Satan wanted Adam and Eve to **doubt** GOD's goodness. He convinced them that GOD was keeping something from them and if they had it, they would be happier.

What did it mean *"you shall be like God?"* **Genesis 3:5 - knowing good and evil**

Eve was **deceived** ----- Adam was **disobedient** (rebellion)

- As a result of the fall, husbands will be tempted to abuse their God-given role of loving, servant leadership, and wives will be tempted to undermine their husbands' role.

Modern Day Application of Genesis 3-4:

Don't Minimize the Danger of Disappointment!

- **Cain** was disappointed when God rejected his offering, and it ended in murder.
- **King Saul** was disappointed when the crowd sang that David had slain his 10,000 and Saul his 1000; it led to the attempted murder of David and Jonathan, conflict with his daughter Michal, and the slaughter of 85 priests.
- **Moses** was disappointed over the people and requested from God to die.
- **Jonah** was disappointed when God saved the pagans and asked God to take his life two times.

1. **Disappointment** – unmet expectations; everyone faces this every day.

2. **Discouragement** – every believer experiences these struggles; being close to God doesn't prevent them. Ex: Elijah

→ **Discouragement is indeed an internal disease.** It starts with the germs of self-doubt. Through fear and negative exaggerations, the germ begins to grow and multiply. Soon we lose our way, we weaken, and we run and hide. As it continues, we become virtually useless and downright defeated. We become easy prey for the enemy of our souls to take charge and nullify our efforts. It can almost happen overnight.

– Chuck Swindoll Re: **Psalm 73**

3. **Doubt** – about God's existence, or if He does exist; doubt about His love or His Word.

4. **Despair** – when we are **influenced** by wrong thoughts and emotions.

5. **Depression** – when we are **controlled** by wrong thoughts and emotions.

6. **Departure** – I am done with... my marriage, my commitment to Christ, my life.

Notes: _____

NOAH AND THE GLOBAL FLOOD

Genesis 6:1-8 Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. ³ And the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." ⁴ There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. ⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. ⁷ So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

- Until Genesis 6, sin had been recorded as coming from individuals; now sin is seen as being committed by entire classes, groups of people, and eventually worldwide.
- "seeing and taking" pattern set up Adam and Eve
- Giants, Sons of God, Angels, and Mighty warriors
- Noah was seen as righteous in his generation **Genesis 6:9 *in his generation**
- Peter and the Flood

2 Peter 3:1-9 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), ² that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, ³ knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." ⁵ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶ by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. ⁷ But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. ⁸ But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

- The theme of 2 Peter is false teachers.
- The argument for Deism by false teachers: God is *not* involved in His creation.
- Peter's reminder: don't listen to skeptics; listen to **Scripture**.
- Peter's reminder: don't use man's timetable.
- Peter's reminder: God is calling all to **repentance**.

→ Peter went on to write that the Lord will purge the earth by fire to present a new earth. The past flood judgment next to the future fire judgment supports the flood being global, since the fire will be global.

Lesson 3: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Three Generations, One Faithful God

Opening Text - Exodus 3:6

"I am the God of your father - the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Exodus 3:6

God repeatedly identifies Himself with these three men. Abraham was the pioneer, Isaac the son of promise, and Jacob the struggler. Their personalities and journeys were different, yet God faithfully worked through all three.

God's faithfulness is bigger than any one person, generation, or personality.

1. ABRAHAM - FAITH THAT STEPS OUT

- God called Abram to leave his country, family, and father's house and go to a land God would show him (Genesis 12:1-2). He did not receive the entire plan. He simply received the next command.
→ *"So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him..." - Genesis 12:4*
- **God spoke. Abraham went.** Faith does not always mean knowing where you're going. Sometimes it means trusting the One who told you to go.
- Abraham's faith was not perfect. He experienced fear, made poor decisions, and tried to help God's promise along through Hagar. Yet God continued working in his life.
→ *"He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief... being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform." - Romans 4:20-21*
- The ultimate test came in Genesis 22 when God told Abraham to offer Isaac - the son he loved and the son through whom the promise would continue. Abraham was willing to put even the promise back into God's hands.
→ *"My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." - Genesis 22:8*

Life Principle: Faith is trusting God enough to obey Him even when we cannot see how everything will work out.

- **Discuss:** What is the difference between trusting God's plan and trusting God Himself? Have you experienced a season when God seemed to say, "Trust Me," without showing you what came next?

ABRAHAM'S WORD: GO

Abraham's story reminds us that sometimes God's call requires leaving what is familiar. The issue is not whether we understand everything. The issue is whether we trust the God who called us.

Question: Is there anything God may be asking you to do that you have delayed because you cannot yet see the whole path?

2. ISAAC - FAITH THAT **STAYS**

- Compared with Abraham and Jacob, Isaac's life seems quieter. Abraham traveled. Jacob struggled. Isaac often simply remained faithful where God placed him.
→ *"Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you..." - Genesis 26:2-3*
- **Abraham's great act of faith was going. Isaac's act of faith was sometimes staying.**
- We often associate faith with dramatic change - starting something, moving somewhere, or taking a major risk. But sometimes faithfulness means **staying where God has placed you**: keep serving, keep praying, keep loving, keep doing what is right.
- Isaac also kept digging wells. When enemies disputed them, he often moved and dug again rather than fighting every battle.
→ *"For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land." - Genesis 26:22*
- Isaac did not have to win every argument or prove himself to everyone. He trusted God to make room for him.

Life Principle: Not every season requires a dramatic move. Sometimes faith means faithfully tending what God has already placed in your hands.

FAITH CANNOT SIMPLY BE INHERITED

- Isaac inherited Abraham's covenant and example, but he still needed his own relationship with God.
→ *"I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you..." - Genesis 26:24*
- **Abraham's faith could influence Isaac, but Abraham could not believe for Isaac.** Every generation must personally encounter God.
→ **Discuss:** Why can staying faithful be harder than stepping into something new? What have you inherited spiritually from those who came before you that you now have a responsibility to carry forward?

ISAAC'S WORD: STAY

There are seasons when God does not ask us to find something new. He asks us to remain faithful with what is already in front of us.

Question: Is there something you are tempted to abandon simply because faithfulness has become difficult, frustrating, or ordinary?

THE QUIET POWER OF FAITHFULNESS

Isaac's story reminds us that a life does not need to be **dramatic** to be **significant**. Quiet obedience, steady faith, and perseverance can carry God's work into another generation.

3. JACOB - FAITH THAT TRANSFORMS

- **If Abraham's word is go, and Isaac's is stay, Jacob's word might be change.**
- Jacob spent much of his early life trying to get ahead. He took advantage of Esau, deceived Isaac, fled home, and later struggled with Laban. Yet God was not finished with him.
- While Jacob was running, God met him at Bethel and promised:
→ *"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go... for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."* - Genesis 28:15
- **God met Jacob while Jacob was still a mess.** He was not approving Jacob's behavior; He was beginning the process of transforming him.

THE NIGHT JACOB WRESTLED WITH GOD

→ *"Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day."* - Genesis 32:24

- Jacob had spent his life wrestling with people and circumstances. Eventually, he had to wrestle with God.
→ *"Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."* - Genesis 32:28
- God changed his name because God was changing the man. Jacob walked away blessed, but he also walked away with a limp.
→ *"Just as he crossed over Peniel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip."* - Genesis 32:31

Jacob entered the encounter wrestling. He left leaning.

- We often begin life believing strength means controlling everything. God teaches us that real strength is **learning to depend upon Him.**

Life Principle: God loves us enough to meet us where we are; He also loves us enough not to leave us there.

Discuss: What was God teaching Jacob through the wrestling experience? Have you experienced something difficult that changed the way you depended upon God?

JACOB'S WORD: CHANGE

Spiritual maturity is not simply knowing more about God. It is allowing our encounter with God to change who we are.

Question: Is there an area of your life where you are still wrestling for control when God may be asking you to surrender and lean on Him?

THREE MEN - ONE GOD

Abraham - GO | Isaac - STAY | Jacob - CHANGE

Abraham: Leave what is familiar and trust Me. **Isaac:** Remain where I have placed you and trust Me. **Jacob:** Stop trying to control everything and let Me transform you.

→ Three men. Three personalities. Three journeys. **One faithful God.**

Abraham **received** the promise. Isaac **inherited** the promise. Jacob was **transformed** by the promise.

THE GOD OF GENERATIONS

→ *"And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations..." - Genesis 17:7*

- God was not merely thinking about Abraham. He was thinking about Isaac, Jacob, Jacob's children, and generations Abraham would never live long enough to meet.
- **What are we passing to the next generation?** We often think about inheritance financially, but Scripture also challenges us to think spiritually.
- What are our children, grandchildren, and those coming behind us learning from the way we trust God, handle adversity, treat people, pray, value Scripture, and follow Him?

We cannot make the next generation follow God. But we can leave them a clear trail to follow.

THE REAL HERO OF THEIR STORIES

Abraham was not perfect. Isaac was not perfect. Jacob certainly was not perfect. Their stories are not monuments to three great men; they are testimonies to one great God.

God called Abraham. God preserved Isaac. God transformed Jacob. And through all three generations, God kept His promise.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

- 1. Abraham - Is God asking me to GO?** Is there something God has been asking me to do that requires faith?
- 2. Isaac - Is God asking me to STAY?** Am I tempted to abandon something because faithfulness has become difficult or ordinary?
- 3. Jacob - Is God asking me to CHANGE?** Is there something in me that I need to surrender to God?
- 4. What am I leaving behind?** If another generation follows the spiritual path I am creating right now, where will that path lead them?

FINAL THOUGHT

→ Abraham teaches us to trust God with the unknown. Isaac teaches us to trust God in the ordinary. Jacob teaches us to trust God with ourselves.

Our circumstances change. Our generations change. Our assignments change. But our God **does not.**

→ *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." - Hebrews 13:8*

Lesson 5: Joseph (part 1)

Faithful Through Suffering

Genesis 37-50

Main Idea:

Joseph's life reminds us that faithfulness to God does not guarantee an easy life. Joseph experienced betrayal, injustice, temptation, false accusation, imprisonment, disappointment, and long seasons of waiting. Yet through every circumstance, God was with him and working all things for good.

Joseph's story teaches us to remain faithful when we cannot understand or see what God is doing and to trust that God can accomplish His purposes even through circumstances that are out of our control, seem unfair, and appear hopeless.

Key Verse: Genesis 50:20 ESV – "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."

1. Joseph Was **Hated** and **Betrayed**

Joseph was deeply loved by his father and given dreams from God about his future. However, Joseph's special standing with his father and his dreams from God stirred up jealousy in his brothers. Instead of dealing with that jealousy, they allowed it to grow into resentment and hatred, and eventually into actions meant to harm Joseph. They went so far as to strip him of his coat, throw him into a pit with the intention of leaving him to die, and eventually to sell him into slavery.

Important Truth:

- Often the deepest pains we experience come from those we love and trust the most. Joseph was not betrayed by strangers. He was betrayed by his brothers. Yet their mistreatment did not remove Joseph from God's care.

Application:

- Joseph could not control his brothers and their actions, but he could control how he responded to mistreatment and injustice. He did not become bitter and resentful. Instead, Joseph's reaction to his many trials shows that his faith and trust were truly in the Lord.
- We often become distressed and filled with anxiety, wishing we could control the actions of others, when our greater focus should be **honoring God in our responses** while remaining faithful despite the circumstances He has allowed.

Discussion Questions:

1. What caused Joseph's brothers to become so angry with him?
2. How can jealousy grow into bitterness if it is not dealt with?
3. Why does betrayal from someone close to us hurt more deeply?
4. What choices do we face when someone treats us unfairly?
5. What could Joseph control in this situation, and what could he not control?

2. Joseph Remained Faithful in an Unwanted Situation

Key Text: Genesis 39:1–6

Joseph's life changed completely when he was taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar. He lost his home, family, freedom, and everything familiar to him, yet instead of letting those circumstances make him bitter or rebellious, Joseph chose to remain faithful and serve well where God placed him.

We often cannot choose our circumstances, but we can choose how we respond to them. Faithfulness means honoring God even in situations we would never have chosen for ourselves.

Important Truths:

- Genesis 39 repeatedly tells us: "The LORD was with Joseph."
- Joseph's circumstances had changed dramatically, but God's faithfulness to Joseph had not. Our circumstances may change, but God's presence and faithfulness do not.
- Joseph also did not wait for ideal circumstances before deciding to honor God and serve Him faithfully. We often place conditions on obedience, telling ourselves things like, "When I make more money, then I'll be generous," "When my kids get a little older, then I'll be able to serve or open my home," or "When I finish this project at work, then I'll make more time for God in prayer and devotions." Sadly, because of our sinful tendencies and because life rarely conforms to our desires or our perception of ideal circumstances, those moments often never come. Instead of waiting for life to become "perfect" before we obey, we must learn to reorder and conform our time, priorities, and desires around the practices of a faithful biblical life.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it tempting to think, "I'll serve God better when my circumstances improve"?
2. What responsibilities has God placed in your life right now that you are neglecting?
3. How can you be faithful even if your circumstances are not what you would have chosen?

Application:

- Faithfulness must often be demonstrated in life's difficulties before God gives us greater opportunities. Joseph was faithful as a servant and a prisoner before he was faithful as a governor in Egypt.

3. Joseph Remained Faithful When Tempted and Falsely Accused

Genesis 39:7–23 - Potiphar's wife repeatedly tempted Joseph, but he refused because he understood that sin was ultimately an offense against God.

Genesis 39:9, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

- Joseph reminds us that faithfulness means caring more about honoring God than simply avoiding consequences. Additionally, sometimes the wisest response to temptation is simply to flee.

Important Truth

Faithfulness means **choosing obedience** even when disobedience seems easier, and obedience comes with a cost. Remember, our responsibility is **faithfulness**, and we leave the results to God.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Joseph's reason for rejecting Potiphar's wife reveal about his view of sin?
2. Why is fleeing temptation sometimes wiser than trying to resist it while remaining close?
3. Are there situations in your own life from which you simply need to remove yourself?

4. Joseph Was Faithful While **Waiting**

Key Text: Genesis 40:1-23

→ **Genesis 40:23**, "Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him."

- Joseph had every reason to lose hope when the butler forgot him, and he remained in prison for two more years; yet his story reminds us that waiting does not mean God has forgotten us.
- Difficult seasons of waiting test our faith, but they also call us to keep trusting that God is still present and working even when we cannot see what He is doing or what He has planned.
- Being forgotten, used, or mistreated by people does not mean we have been forgotten or mistreated by God.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is waiting difficult for us?
2. What does it reveal when we believe that God should work according to our timetable?
3. What might God accomplish in us during seasons of waiting?
4. How can we remain faithful when no one seems to notice?

5. God Exalted Joseph at the Right Time

Key Text: Genesis 41:14-16, 37-44

- Two years later, Joseph was brought before Pharaoh to interpret his dreams, but he immediately gave the credit to God: "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."
- **Genesis 41:16** - God gave Joseph the wisdom he needed, and Pharaoh ultimately elevated him to second in command over Egypt.

Important Truths:

- Joseph went from prisoner to ruler in a remarkably short period of time, but God had spent years preparing him for that moment.
- Joseph learned faithfulness to God when betrayed by his brothers, responsibility in Potiphar's house, integrity through temptation, endurance through injustice, service while imprisoned, patience while forgotten, and dependence on God in all circumstances.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Joseph's response to Pharaoh reveal about his character?
2. How had Joseph's previous experiences prepared him to lead?
3. Why might success sometimes test our character even more than suffering?
4. What happens when we forget God after He changes our circumstances?
5. How can we remain humble when God gives us success?

6. God Used Joseph to Save His Family

Key Texts: Genesis 42:1-8 and Genesis 45:1-8

- When the famine brought Joseph's brothers to Egypt, they unknowingly bowed before the brother they had once rejected. Joseph could now see that God had been working through everything he had suffered to preserve his family and to keep His promises to Joseph.
→ **Genesis 45:5**, "But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life."

Important Truths:

- Joseph's brothers were responsible for their evil actions, and their sin was still sin. However, their evil worked to fulfill God's purposes.
- God took the very circumstances meant to destroy Joseph and used them to place him exactly where God desired him to be.

Discussion Questions:

1. Could Joseph have understood God's plan when his brothers sold him or while sitting in prison? When did Joseph begin to see how the pieces fit together?
2. What does this story teach us about circumstances we currently do not understand?

7. Joseph Forgave Those Who Hurt Him

Key Text: Genesis 50:15-21

- After Jacob's death, Joseph's brothers feared Joseph would take revenge, but Joseph entrusted justice to God and chose to truly forgive his brothers.
→ **Genesis 50:19**, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God?"
- **Joseph never minimized or dismissed what his brothers had done to him; in fact, he clearly called it evil. Yet he also trusted that God takes even the worst things done against us and uses them to accomplish His good purposes.**
→ **Genesis 50:20**, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good."

Discussion Questions

1. How did trusting God help Joseph release his desire for revenge?
2. Why does bitterness often grow when we believe everything depends on us receiving justice immediately?

Remember: Forgiveness does not mean that justice no longer matters. It means we refuse to put ourselves in God's place as judge and avenge the wrong ourselves. We may pursue justice through appropriate, God-given means, but as followers of Christ we do so while guarding our hearts from hatred, vengeance, or bitterness. In so doing, we entrust final judgment to God and trust that He is able to bring about good, even through the evils committed against us.

WEEK ONE: THE BIG PICTURE

- Joseph experienced: rejection, jealousy, betrayal, slavery, temptation, false accusation, imprisonment, disappointment, being forgotten, years of waiting, sudden success, great responsibility, and the opportunity for revenge.
- Yet throughout Joseph's story, he remained faithful, and throughout Joseph's story, despite these many trials God remained perfectly faithful. Joseph could not see what God was doing, but God was always working to bring about His glory and good for Joseph.

Four Major Lessons from Joseph's Life:

1. Faithfulness is not dependent upon our circumstances.

Joseph served God in his father's house, Potiphar's house, the prison, and Pharaoh's palace. Wherever Joseph was, he served faithfully.

2. Doing the right thing does not guarantee our definition of success.

Joseph obeyed God and still suffered. Our faithfulness cannot depend upon whether obedience produces the outcome we hoped for.

3. God is working even when we cannot see what He is doing.

Joseph did not know what would happen from his time in the pit to the palace. He could not see the future while sitting in prison, but he trusted that God was still directing his life even when he could not see what God was doing.

4. Trusting God enables us to be free from bitterness.

Joseph eventually saw his suffering through the lens of God's providence. His brothers were responsible for their evil, but God was working in and through it to bring about good.

Personal Reflection:

1. Where is God asking you to remain faithful right now?
2. Are you waiting for God to change a situation before you're willing to be faithful where He has you now?
3. Have you been tempted to become bitter because you feel forgotten or mistreated?
4. Is there a temptation from which you need to flee?
5. Are you allowing another person's actions to control your attitude?
6. Can you trust that God may be doing something you can't see or understand yet?
7. Is there someone whose wrongdoing you need to entrust to God?

Lesson 6: Joseph (part 2)

An Old Testament Picture of Christ

Main Idea:

After studying Joseph's story on its own, we can now look back over his life and recognize a remarkable pattern. Many events in Joseph's life resemble events that would later be perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Joseph is not equal to Jesus, and we should not force every detail of his life into a comparison. However, Joseph's story contains several powerful themes that prepare us to understand Christ:

- the beloved son
- sent by his father
- rejected by his own
- betrayed
- sold for silver
- falsely accused
- suffering though innocent
- humiliation followed by exaltation
- authority used to save others
- forgiveness offered to those who wronged him

The point is not that Joseph's life coincidentally resembles the life of Christ, but that God, through Joseph's story, was already pointing forward to the greater Savior to come. Joseph's life is not ultimately about Joseph; it directs our attention beyond him to Jesus Christ.

1. Joseph Was the Beloved Son

- **Genesis 37:3**, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children."
- At Jesus' baptism, the Father declared: **Matthew 3:17**, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
- Joseph was the beloved son of Jacob, but Jesus is the beloved Son of God. Joseph's relationship with his father gives us a small and imperfect picture of something infinitely greater in Christ. Jacob loved Joseph deeply and openly expressed his affection for him, while the Father's love for the Son is perfect, eternal, and complete. So while Joseph was a favored son within his family, Jesus is the eternal Son who has always existed in perfect fellowship with the Father. Joseph's story gives us a glimpse, but Christ gives us the full picture of God's love both for His special Son and for His sinful wayward children.

2. Joseph Was Sent by His Father

- Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers.
- **Genesis 37:14**, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers."
- Jesus repeatedly described Himself as the One sent by the Father. **John 3:17**, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

- Joseph was sent by his father for the well-being of his brothers. In a much greater way, Jesus was sent from the Father into the world for the good of God's children who were lost and gone astray. Joseph went to brothers who would reject and mistreat him, while Jesus came to a world that would reject Him and ultimately crucify Him. Joseph came because his father sent him to care for his brothers, but Jesus came to accomplish something far greater: "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Joseph's mission points us forward to Christ, the Son willingly sent by the Father to rescue sinners.

3. Joseph Was **Rejected by His Own**

- **John 1:11**, "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him."
- Joseph was rejected by his own brothers, the ones who should have loved and welcomed him most. Instead, their jealousy and hatred caused them to reject him rather than receive him. In a far greater way, Jesus also came to His own and was rejected: The very people who had been given the promises of God and were supposed to be waiting and watching for the Messiah failed to recognize and receive Him when He came. Joseph's rejection by his brothers gives us another small picture of the greater rejection Christ would endure at the hands of His own people.

4. Joseph's Brothers **Conspired Against Him**

- **Genesis 37:20**, "Come therefore, let us now kill him..."
- **Matthew 26:3-4**, "Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled...and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him."
- Joseph's brothers did not merely reject him; they plotted to kill him. In a similar but far greater way, the religious leaders conspired against Jesus, seeking a way to arrest and put Him to death. In both cases, hatred moved beyond rejection to a desire for destruction. Joseph had seemingly done nothing to deserve this harsh treatment, while Jesus was completely innocent and without sin. Yet Joseph's rejection points forward to something even greater in Christ: Jesus was not only rejected by His own people, but willingly gave His life to save the sinners who rejected Him.

5. Joseph Was **Stripped**

- **Genesis 37:23**, "So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him."
- **Matthew 27:28**, "And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him."
- Joseph's brothers stripped him of the special coat his father had given him, taking away the garment that represented Jacob's love and favor. In a far greater way, Jesus was stripped, mocked, and publicly humiliated before His crucifixion, and the soldiers later divided His garments among themselves. In both cases, those who rejected them sought not only to harm them but also to shame them. Joseph's humiliation provides another picture that points forward to Christ, who willingly endured public shame and rejection as He went to the cross, where He bore our sin and the judgment it rightly deserved, even crying out in the anguish of forsakenness, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

6. Joseph Was Sold for Silver

- **Genesis 37:28**, "Then Midianite traders passed by; so *the brothers* pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty *shekels* of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt."
- **Matthew 26:15**, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver."
- Both Joseph and Jesus were betrayed for silver by people who were close to them. While the amount was different, the similarity is striking. In both cases, those who betrayed them treated their lives as though they could simply be assigned a price and exchanged for personal gain. Joseph was sold by his own brothers, while Jesus was betrayed by one of His own disciples.

7. Joseph Was Innocent Yet Falsely Accused

- **Genesis 39:8-9**, "But he refused and said to his master's wife, 'Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand... **How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?**'"
- **Genesis 39:17-18**, "Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, 'The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me; so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside.'"
- **Matthew 26:59-60**, "Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none."
- Joseph resisted Potiphar's wife because he desired to remain faithful to God, yet she responded by falsely accusing him, and Joseph suffered for something he had not done. In a far greater way, Jesus was completely sinless: **1 Peter 2:22, "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"**. Yet false testimony was also brought against Him as the religious leaders, in **Matthew 26:59, "sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death"**. Although Joseph was innocent of the accusation for which he was imprisoned and suffered, Jesus was completely innocent of every charge brought against Him. Joseph was still a sinner in need of God's grace, while Jesus was perfectly sinless, yet this sinlessness did not keep the religious leaders from seeking His death or others from raising false accusations.

8. Joseph Suffered Beside Two Prisoners

- Joseph was imprisoned alongside Pharaoh's butler and baker; one was restored to his position while the other was condemned (Genesis 40:20-22). In a similar way, Jesus was crucified between two criminals, one of whom turned to Him in faith and was promised, **Luke 23:43, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise"**, while the other remained in unbelief. In the accounts of both Joseph and Jesus, the innocent sufferer is placed beside two guilty men whose outcomes are dramatically different.

9. Joseph Went from Humiliation to Exaltation

- **Genesis 41:14**, "Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh."
- **Genesis 41:40-41**, "You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.'"
- **Philippians 2:8-9**, "He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name."
- **Hebrews 12:2**, "Who, for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
- **Joseph - pit → slavery → prison → palace**
- **Jesus - manger → rejection → cross → throne**
- Joseph went from the pit, to slavery, to prison, and finally to the palace, where Pharaoh exalted him to rule over all Egypt. In a far greater way, Jesus went from the humility of the manger, through rejection and the shame of the cross, to the throne at the right hand of God. Joseph was brought out of humiliation and given great authority, but Christ's exaltation is infinitely greater! He has been given the name above every name and seated at the right hand of the throne of God. While Joseph ruled over Egypt, Jesus rightly reigns over all!

10. Joseph Became the Means of Saving Many Lives

- **Genesis 45:5**, "But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life."
- **Acts 4:10-12**, "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
- God used Joseph to preserve many lives during the famine, as Joseph himself said, "God sent me before you to preserve life". Through the provision God gave through Joseph, people were rescued from physical death. In a far greater way, Jesus came to save His people from sin and eternal death. As Acts 4:12 declares, "Nor is there salvation in any other." Joseph preserved physical life for a time, but Jesus gives eternal life to all who put their faith in Him.

11. Joseph Forgave Those Who Had Wronged Him

- **Genesis 50:21**, "Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones."
- **Luke 23:34**, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."
- Joseph eventually possessed enormous power over the very brothers who had betrayed him and could have chosen to punish them, but instead he showed mercy, comforted them, and provided for them. In a far greater way, Jesus offers true forgiveness, grace, and mercy to sinners who rebel against Him. Joseph forgave those who wronged him, but Jesus does something infinitely greater: through His own suffering and death, He provides the very basis by which guilty sinners can be not only forgiven but found righteous and reconciled to a holy God.

12. Those Who **Rejected** Joseph Eventually Bowed Before Him

- **Genesis 42:6**, "Now Joseph was governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with their faces to the earth."
- **Philippians 2:9-11**, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
- Joseph's brothers mocked the idea that they would ever bow before him, yet years later they came to Egypt and did exactly that without even realizing who Joseph was. In a far greater way, many people reject the authority and lordship of Jesus today, but Scripture teaches that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. **The question is not if you will acknowledge Jesus as Lord, it is when...**

13. What Men Intended for Evil, God Used for **Salvation**

- **Genesis 50:20**, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive."
- **Acts 2:22-24**, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— ²³ Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴ whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it."
- Here is the greatest connection between Joseph and Jesus, and it is not by chance. The story of Joseph is purposefully a picture of the gospel fulfilled in Christ. Joseph's brothers were truly guilty, and what they did to him was genuinely evil, yet God sovereignly used their actions to preserve many lives. In the same way, those who crucified Jesus were responsible for their sin, but through that very act God accomplished His plan of redemption. Joseph's brothers intended evil, and God used it for good; the enemies of Christ intended evil, and God used the cross to bring salvation. In both cases, human sin could not overthrow the sovereign purposes of God.

Overview

Joseph

Beloved son of Jacob
Sent by his father
Rejected by his brothers
Conspired against
Stripped of his garment
Sold for twenty pieces of silver
Innocent of the accusation
Falsely accused
Suffered unjustly

Jesus

Beloved Son of God
Sent by the Father
Rejected by His own
Conspired against
Stripped and humiliated
Betrayed for thirty pieces of silver
Completely sinless
Falsely accused
Suffered unjustly

Joseph

Suffered beside two prisoners
Went from humiliation to exaltation
Received authority in Egypt
Saved many from physical death
Brothers eventually bowed
Forgave those who betrayed him
Evil against him became the means of saving others

Jesus

Crucified between two criminals
Humbled Himself and was highly exalted
Possesses all authority
Saves from sin and eternal death
Every knee will bow
Offers forgiveness to sinners
The evil of the cross became the means of redemption

Discussion Questions

1. Which similarity between Joseph and Jesus stands out to you most and why?
 2. Why is the connection between Genesis 50:20 and Acts 2:23 so significant?
 3. How does Joseph help us as believers understand the pattern of suffering followed by exaltation, and how should that affect the way we view suffering and trials?
 4. Joseph's brothers eventually bowed before him. What does Scripture teach about Christ's ultimate authority?
 5. How does seeing God's sovereignty in Joseph's story help us understand the cross?
- Joseph's brothers had rejected the very one God would ultimately use to save them, and years later they found themselves standing before him in desperate need. This gives us a powerful picture of the gospel. Humanity has rebelled against God and rejected His Son, yet the very One mankind rejected has become the Savior we desperately need. Jesus was rejected, betrayed, falsely accused, unjustly condemned, and killed, but God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him above every name. Now the rejected Son offers forgiveness and eternal life to the very sinners who have rebelled against Him. Joseph's story gives us a glimpse; Jesus gives us the full picture of the eternal plans of God.

One Last Thing...

Joseph reminds us that God can use suffering for good...The cross proves it.

The God who faithfully directed Joseph's life is the same God who sovereignly accomplished our salvation through Jesus Christ and is the same God at work in your life...Can you trust that He is at work in even the most difficult areas of your life?

Lesson 4: Moses

From Excuses to Extraordinary: How God Uses Ordinary People Who Are Willing to Follow Him

Opening Text - Exodus 3:10-12

"Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh..." Moses answered, "Who am I...?" God replied, "I will certainly be with you."

Moses would confront Pharaoh, lead Israel out of Egypt, see the Red Sea part, receive the Ten Commandments, and lead God's people through the wilderness. But when God called him, Moses saw his weaknesses, failures, and past. God saw what Moses could become if he trusted Him.

God wasn't telling Moses, "You're better than you think you are." He was telling him, "I am greater than you think I am."

1. GOD CAN USE YOUR PAST

- Moses began life under a death sentence (Exodus 1:22). Yet Pharaoh's daughter found him, and the Hebrew baby who was supposed to die was raised in Pharaoh's own household. That's not coincidence. That's providence.
- Later Moses killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew and fled to Midian (Exodus 2:11-12). His concern for justice was right, but his action was wrong. Suddenly the man raised in a palace was tending sheep in a desert.
- **40 years in Egypt:** he learned Pharaoh's world. **40 years in Midian:** he learned the wilderness. What looked like wasted years became training years. One day he would need both.

Life Principle: God can use parts of your story you thought were wasted. Failures do not have to be the final chapter, and detours do not have to be meaningless.

Discuss: When have you looked back and realized God was preparing you in a season that seemed unimportant? How can God redeem our mistakes without approving of them?

2. GOD WANTS YOUR OBEDIENCE, NOT YOUR CONFIDENCE

- At about 80 years old, Moses met God at the burning bush. His response was a series of excuses:
 - **"Who am I?"** (Ex. 3:11) - God: "I will certainly be with you."
 - **"Who sent me?"** - God: "I AM WHO I AM." (3:14)
 - **"What if they don't believe me?"** (4:1) - God gave signs of His power.
 - **"I'm not a good speaker."** (4:10) - God: "I will be with your mouth."
 - **"Please send somebody else."** (4:13) - Moses finally exposed the real issue: fear and reluctance.

Life Principle: God's presence is more important than our confidence. The question isn't, "Am I capable?" but, "Has God called me, and will I obey?"

Discuss: Which of Moses' excuses sounds most familiar to you? How often do we disguise fear as a legitimate reason for disobedience?

3. FAITH SOMETIMES MOVES BEFORE IT SEES THE WAY

- Moses returned to Egypt and declared to Pharaoh, "Let My people go" (Exodus 5:1). Pharaoh refused, the plagues followed, and eventually Israel left Egypt. Then Pharaoh pursued them.
- Israel was trapped: the Red Sea in front and Pharaoh's army behind. Moses said, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD" (14:13). Then God said, "Tell the children of Israel to go forward" (14:15).
- **There is a time to stand still and trust God. There is also a time to GO FORWARD.**
- Moses stretched out his hand, God divided the sea, and Israel crossed on dry ground.

Life Principle: Faith doesn't require seeing the entire path. Faith requires trusting the God who knows the path.

Discuss: Have you faced a situation where there seemed to be no good way forward? What is the difference between reckless action and moving forward in faith?

4. LEADERSHIP CAN BE HEAVY

- After the Red Sea came another challenge: people. Israel complained about food, water, Moses, and the wilderness. Moses tried to carry the burden himself.
→ *"The thing that you do is not good... you will surely wear yourselves out... you are not able to perform it by yourself." - Exodus 18:17-18*
- Jethro advised Moses to appoint capable leaders and distribute responsibility.

Delegating responsibility isn't weakness. It's wisdom. Just because God called you to something doesn't mean He expects you to do it alone.

Discuss: Why is asking for help difficult? Are you carrying responsibilities God may never have intended you to carry alone?

5. GOD WANTS **RELATIONSHIP**, NOT JUST **SERVICE**

- *"The LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." - Exodus 33:11*
- Moses wasn't merely working for God; he was walking with God.
→ *"If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here." - Exodus 33:15*
- Earlier Moses asked, "Who am I?" Now he understood the more important question: "God, are You with us?"
- We can become so focused on doing things for God that we neglect being with God. Bible study becomes information, ministry becomes work, church becomes routine, and prayer becomes only requests.

Life Principle: The greatest thing God gives us isn't an assignment, blessing, destination, or opportunity. The greatest thing He gives us is Himself.

Discuss: What does it look like to desire God's presence more than His blessings? Can we become so busy serving God that we neglect our relationship with Him?

6. EVEN GREAT PEOPLE HAVE BLIND SPOTS

- Near the end of Moses' journey, Israel again complained about water. God told Moses, "Speak to the rock" (Numbers 20:8). Frustrated and angry, Moses instead struck the rock twice.
- Water still came out, but Moses had disobeyed. The consequence was severe: he would not lead Israel into the Promised Land.

Past faithfulness does not excuse present disobedience. We never reach a point where we no longer need humility, dependence, and obedience.

Life Principle: Be especially careful when you're tired, frustrated, or angry. Those are moments when even mature believers can make costly decisions.

Discuss: Why can frustration be spiritually dangerous? What safeguards help keep our emotions from controlling our responses?

7. FINISHING WELL

- Moses' story ends in Deuteronomy 34. At 120 years old, he saw the Promised Land from Mount Nebo, although he did not enter it.
→ *"But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face."* - Deuteronomy 34:10
- Think about where he started: "Who am I?" "What if they don't believe me?" "I can't speak." "Send somebody else." Yet Moses became one of Scripture's greatest leaders.

The shepherd became a deliverer. The fugitive became a leader. The reluctant servant became a friend of God.

THE LIFE OF MOSES IN FOUR WORDS

1. PREPARATION - God was working when Moses couldn't see it.

2. CALLING - God called Moses despite his insecurities.

3. DEPENDENCE - Moses learned that he desperately needed God's presence.

4. FAITHFULNESS - Moses spent the remainder of his life following God's assignment.

A POWERFUL DETAIL: MOSES WAS 80

- Moses was approximately 80 years old when God called him from the burning bush. His greatest season of influence was not behind him. It was ahead of him.
- That should challenge the way we think about age, usefulness, and calling. A season can end without God's purpose for our lives ending.

Never assume God is finished with you simply because one season of your life has ended.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

1. What excuse am I giving God?

"I'm too old." "I'm too young." "I'm not qualified." "I've made too many mistakes." "Someone else could do it better." Remember God's answer to Moses: "I will certainly be with you."

2. Where is God asking me to move forward?

Maybe you're standing at your own Red Sea. God may not show you the entire path. He may simply show you the next step. Take it.

3. Am I trying to carry something alone?

Maybe you need to ask for help. Maybe you need to delegate. Maybe you need to stop believing everything depends upon you. It doesn't.

4. Do I want God's hand or God's presence?

It's easy to pray, "God, bless this." A deeper prayer is: "God, I don't want to go anywhere You're not leading."

5. What could God do through the rest of my life?

Moses was 80 when God called him. His greatest season of influence was ahead of him. Whatever season you are in, don't automatically assume your most meaningful usefulness to God is behind you.

FINAL THOUGHT

Moses began by asking: "Who am I?" But that was never really the point.

→ **The question wasn't: Who is Moses?**

→ **The question was: Who is Moses' God?**

→ *"And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'" - Exodus 3:14*

Moses didn't become extraordinary because he finally discovered how extraordinary he was. Moses became extraordinary because an ordinary man learned to **trust an extraordinary God.**

Closing Scripture - Exodus 33:14

→ *"And He said, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'"*

Your past doesn't disqualify you.

Your weakness doesn't surprise God.

Your excuses don't change His ability.

Your age doesn't limit His purpose.

And whatever God calls you to do, His presence is more than enough.

Lesson 7: David

A Heart After God: Faith, Failure, Repentance, and Finishing Well

Opening Text - Acts 13:22

"I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." - Acts 13:22 (NKJV)

David was a shepherd, warrior, fugitive, king, worshiper, husband, father, sinner, and repentant servant of God. He killed Goliath, wrote many Psalms, became Israel's great king, and received God's promise that the Messiah would come through his line. Yet he also committed terrible sins and experienced painful consequences.

Having a heart after God doesn't mean never failing. It means continually turning your heart back toward God.

1. GOD SEES WHAT OTHERS OVERLOOK

- When God rejected Saul as king, He sent Samuel to Jesse's home to anoint the next king. Samuel saw Eliab and thought he looked like a king, but God corrected him.
→ *"For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." - 1 Samuel 16:7*
- Jesse brought seven sons before Samuel, but God rejected them all. David was not even invited to the meeting; he was keeping sheep. Yet God said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!" (1 Samuel 16:12).

Life Principle: God's evaluation of us is far more important than people's evaluation of us. Never confuse being overlooked by people with being overlooked by God.

Discuss: Why are we so easily impressed by outward appearances? Have you ever felt overlooked and later realized God was preparing you?

2. PRIVATE FAITH PREPARES US FOR PUBLIC BATTLES

- When Israel's army feared Goliath, David saw the situation differently. Everyone else saw a giant; David saw the living God.
→ *"For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" - 1 Samuel 17:26*
- David told Saul that while tending sheep he had faced lions and bears. Nobody applauded those private battles, but God was preparing him for a public one.
→ *"The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." - 1 Samuel 17:37*
- David's confidence was not simply, "I can defeat Goliath." It was, "God has been faithful before, and I trust Him now."

Life Principle: Today's private faithfulness may be preparation for tomorrow's public challenge. The field may be preparing you for the battlefield.

Discuss: What "lions and bears" has God already brought you through? How can remembering His past faithfulness strengthen today's faith?

3. DON'T FORCE WHAT GOD HAS PROMISED

- David was anointed king long before he actually became king. Between the anointing and the appointment came years of waiting, persecution, and life as a fugitive.
- Twice David had opportunities to kill Saul. His men saw those moments as God's opportunity, but David refused.
→ *"The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the LORD's anointed..." - 1 Samuel 24:6*
- David understood that if God promised him the throne, he did not need to sin to get there. He did not have to manipulate circumstances, force God's timing, or destroy someone else to receive God's promise.

Life Principle: Never compromise your character trying to accomplish God's will. Sometimes the hardest faith is waiting for God to do it His way and in His time.

Discuss: Why is waiting on God's timing difficult? Have you ever been tempted to force something you believed God wanted for you?

4. SUCCESS CAN BE MORE DANGEROUS THAN STRUGGLE

- Eventually David became king. God blessed him, enemies were conquered, Jerusalem became the capital, and the kingdom prospered. Then came one of the darkest chapters of his life.
→ *"It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle... But David remained at Jerusalem." - 2 Samuel 11:1*
- David saw Bathsheba, committed adultery, attempted to cover the resulting pregnancy, and ultimately arranged for her husband Uriah to die in battle.
- David stood faithfully against Goliath when he was young, but years later fell to temptation when he was powerful. Sometimes comfort, success, isolation, and overconfidence are more dangerous than obvious giants.
→ *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." - 1 Corinthians 10:12*

Life Principle: Never allow yesterday's spiritual victories to convince you that you are immune to today's temptations. Spiritual maturity does not eliminate our need for guardrails.

Discuss: Why can success create greater spiritual danger than struggle? What practical guardrails help protect us when we are vulnerable?

5. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REGRET AND REPENTANCE

- God sent Nathan the prophet to confront David. After telling him a story about a rich man stealing a poor man's only lamb, Nathan declared: *"You are the man!" - 2 Samuel 12:7*
- David could have denied, blamed, excused, or silenced Nathan. Instead he said, "I have sinned against the LORD" (2 Samuel 12:13). Psalm 51 reveals the depth of his repentance.
→ *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." - Psalm 51:10*
- **Regret says:** "I hate what this has cost me." **Repentance says:** "I hate what my sin has done to my relationship with God."

Life Principle: God isn't looking for people who never need repentance. He is looking for hearts humble enough to repent when they are wrong.

Discuss: What is the difference between being sorry about consequences and genuinely repenting? Why is it difficult to simply say, "I was wrong"?

6. FORGIVENESS DOESN'T ALWAYS REMOVE CONSEQUENCES

- God forgave David, but his sin still produced painful consequences. His family experienced conflict, tragedy, and rebellion. His son Absalom eventually rebelled, forcing David to flee Jerusalem.

Forgiveness and consequences are not the same thing.

- God can completely forgive our sin while allowing consequences to remain. That does not mean He has not forgiven us; it means choices matter.
→ *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." - Galatians 6:7*
- Grace does not make sin insignificant. Grace demonstrates how incredible God's forgiveness is despite the seriousness of sin.

Life Principle: God's grace can redeem our future without pretending our past never happened. Our worst chapter does not have to become our final chapter.

Discuss: Why do we sometimes assume forgiveness should remove every consequence? How can God use painful consequences to continue transforming us?

7. LEAVE SOMETHING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

- Near the end of David's life, he wanted to build the temple. God told him that his son Solomon would build it instead. David could have refused to help with a project he would not complete, but he did the opposite.
- David gathered materials, organized leaders, gave generously, and prepared for Solomon's success.
→ *"So David made abundant preparations before his death." - 1 Chronicles 22:5*
- David understood that God's Kingdom was bigger than David. Sometimes our greatest contribution is not what we accomplish ourselves, but what we prepare the next generation to accomplish.

Life Principle: A life well lived doesn't simply ask, "What can I accomplish?" It asks, "What can I prepare others to accomplish after I'm gone?"

Discuss: What are you intentionally passing to the generation coming behind you? Are you building something that can continue without you?

THE LIFE OF DAVID IN FOUR WORDS:

- 1. HEART** - God saw something in David that others overlooked.
- 2. FAITH** - David trusted God when facing impossible circumstances.
- 3. FAILURE** - Even a mature believer can fall when guardrails disappear.
- 4. REPENTANCE** - David's failure was not the end because he returned to God.

WHAT MADE DAVID DIFFERENT? David was not unique because he never failed. He was unique because his life repeatedly bent back toward God. In victory he worshiped. In fear he prayed. In sin he eventually repented. In old age he prepared the next generation.

A heart after God is not a perfect heart. It is a heart that keeps coming home.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

1. What does God see when He looks at my heart?

People may see success, appearance, and actions. God sees motives, desires, and the condition of the heart.

2. What giant am I facing?

Remember the lions and bears. God's past faithfulness should strengthen today's faith. Don't measure the giant without remembering the size of your God.

3. Am I trying to force something God has asked me to trust Him with?

Don't sacrifice character to accelerate God's timing. If God's way requires compromise, it isn't God's way.

4. Where am I vulnerable?

Past victories do not eliminate present temptation. Stay humble. Keep guardrails. Pay attention when comfort, isolation, success, or exhaustion weaken your defenses.

5. Is there anything I need to repent of?

Not explain. Not minimize. Not blame. Own it. Confess it. Turn from it. David's restoration began when he stopped hiding and said, "I have sinned against the LORD."

6. What am I leaving behind?

What will your children, grandchildren, friends, coworkers, and others coming behind you receive because you were here? A faithful life prepares others to go farther.

FINAL THOUGHT: David's life was not a straight line upward. There were incredible victories, terrible failures, seasons of worship, seasons of fear, moments of tremendous faith, and moments of devastating sin.

Yet through it all, David kept returning to God.

A heart after God isn't a perfect heart. It's a heart that keeps coming home.

When David succeeded, he worshiped. When he was afraid, he cried out to God. When he sinned, he repented. When he grew old, he prepared the next generation.

→ *"I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." - Acts 13:22 (NKJV)*

REMEMBER:

God sees your heart when others overlook you.

Private faithfulness prepares you for public battles.

Never compromise your character to force God's timing.

Past victories don't make you immune to present temptation.

When you fall, run toward God - not away from Him.

Live today in a way that leaves something worth following tomorrow.

Lesson 8: Solomon

The Wise Man Who Failed to **Guard His Heart**

Primary Text: 1 Kings 3-11

Additional Texts: Deuteronomy 17:14-20; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Main Idea:

Solomon began his reign with humility and was given extraordinary wisdom by God. Yet the wisest man in the world eventually failed to obey the truths he knew and taught. His life warns us that knowledge alone cannot keep us faithful—we must fear God, obey His Word, and continually guard our hearts.

Key Verse: Proverbs 4:23 "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."

1. Solomon **Humbly Asked God for Wisdom**

1 Kings 3:5-14

When God invited Solomon to ask for anything, Solomon did not request riches, long life, or victory over his enemies. Recognizing his youth and the weight of the responsibility before him, he asked for wise discernment.

1 Kings 3:9, "Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil."

Solomon began his reign with humility. He recognized his own insufficiency and understood that he could not properly lead God's people without God's help.

The Lord was pleased with Solomon's request, and because of the heart behind Solomon's request, the Lord not only gave him extraordinary wisdom but also great wealth and honor. Solomon became known throughout the world for his understanding, discernment, knowledge, wealth, and honor...In Solomon's initial request of God, we see that...**true wisdom begins when we recognize our insufficiency and depend on God.**

Discussion Questions

1. What does Solomon's request reveal about his heart at the beginning of his reign?
2. Why was God pleased with what Solomon requested?
3. What do our prayers reveal about the things we value most?

2. Solomon Allowed Other Loves to Turn His Heart

1 Kings 11:1-8

1 Kings 11:1 "But King Solomon loved many foreign women."

Solomon's problem was ultimately a problem of disordered love. God had warned Israel against marrying those who worshiped other gods because they would turn their hearts away from Him. Solomon knew the warning but chose to disregard it.

1 Kings 11:4, "For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God."

Solomon did not abandon God in a single moment. His heart was gradually turned through tolerated compromises, misplaced affections, and repeated disobedience. The man who built the temple of the Lord eventually built places of worship for false gods. The king who told Israel to remain loyal to God failed to guard his own heart.

The greatest danger to our faith is not that we will suddenly reject God, but that we will gradually allow other things to creep in and slowly take rule of the places in our hearts where God once did.

3. God Kept His Promise to Solomon, But Solomon **Failed to Heed His Own Advice**

1 Kings 3:16-28; 4:29-34; Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 1 Kings 10:23-29

God kept his promise and gave Solomon the wisdom he requested. He demonstrated remarkable discernment, wrote wisdom literature, composed songs, and possessed extensive knowledge of the natural world. So much so that other kings and rulers came and sent others to hear him. He also built the temple and desired for Israel to remain faithful to the Lord.

1 Kings 8:61, "Let your heart therefore be loyal to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments."

Long before Solomon became king, God gave specific commands for Israel's kings. A king was not to multiply horses, wives, or store up silver and gold for himself. He was to read God's law throughout his life so he could walk in it and remain humble and obedient to it. However, Solomon did exactly what God had forbidden. He accumulated enormous wealth, multiplied horses and chariots, and took many wives for himself, many of whom were foreign.

These decisions were likely excused and viewed as politically advantageous, but they were direct acts of disobedience. Solomon's downfall did not come when he built altars to false gods; it began when he decided that smaller compromises with God's Word were acceptable.

Solomon did not fail because he lacked **knowledge. He failed because he allowed **wrong** thinking to excuse wrong actions, and he gradually compromised until he almost completely lost sight of the **truth** he once knew and obeyed.**

Solomon understood and knew the importance of having a heart wholly devoted to God. He taught and encouraged others to remain faithful, but he failed to follow his own counsel. This demonstrates an important truth... **It is possible to know the truth, teach the truth, and give wise counsel to others while failing to apply that truth to your own life. Solomon's life warns us that knowing a lot about God is not the same as walking faithfully with God; truth must penetrate our hearts and transform how we live.**

Discussion Questions

1. What progression can we see in Solomon's spiritual decline?
2. What does Solomon's failure teach us about the power of our affections?
3. What things can gradually compete with our love for God?
4. Why did Solomon's wisdom not protect him from sin?
5. How might Solomon have justified his compromises?
6. Why are "small" acts of disobedience spiritually dangerous?
7. Are there areas where we know what God has said but continue to make exceptions for ourselves? What are some excuses that we often give for our lack of obedience?

4. Solomon's Sin Brought Serious Consequences

1 Kings 11:9-13

1 Kings 11:9: "So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel."

Because of Solomon's disobedience and his turning away from the Lord, God told Solomon that the kingdom would be torn apart after his death. The division that first appeared in Solomon's heart eventually appeared in the nation he ruled, and his disobedience toward God was even more revealed in the lives of his children... **Solomon's sin not only affected his heart and life but his family, his kingdom, and future generations. Sin rarely remains confined to the person who chooses it.**

One Last Thing...

Solomon knew the truth, taught the truth, and warned others about abandoning the truth, but he failed to apply that truth to his own life.

If the wisest man who ever lived could gradually be led away from God, why should any of us believe that we are beyond the danger of spiritual failure?

Solomon's life demonstrates the difference between knowing truth and obeying truth; between teaching wisdom and living wisely; between possessing spiritual gifts and developing spiritual character; between beginning humbly and finishing faithfully; between recognizing sin in others and confronting it in our own lives.

Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Lesson 9: Daniel

A Hope that Produces Faithfulness

The book of Daniel is filled with action and mystery as it covers miraculous rescues, strange dreams, and visions of the future. However, much more than that, it is the story of and call for God's people to live faithfully in a world that opposes Him and the promise that no matter what is happening, God is ruling and reigning and will one day keep His promise to make all things new.

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, along with many other Jewish youth, were taken from their homes and carried into Babylon. They lived under pagan rulers who desired to change their names, reshape their identities, and force them to compromise and abandon their faith. Yet these young men remained faithful in spite of their extremely difficult circumstances, because their confidence was rooted in their understanding that God was above all things... **They believed that God was sovereign over earthly kingdoms, present with His people in their suffering, and certain to be victorious in the end. Their hope in God gave them the courage to remain faithful, even when faithfulness could cost them their lives.**

Key Verse: Daniel 6:26, "For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion *shall endure to the end.*"

1. Faithfulness Begins with Small **Decisions**

When Daniel and his friends arrived in Babylon, they were cast into a culture that did not honor God. They were given Babylonian names, instructed in the Babylonian ways, and taught to love and serve a pagan country and king.

The first act of faithfulness recorded in the book of Daniel did not involve a fiery furnace or a den of lions. It involved a decision about food.

Daniel 1:8, "But Daniel **purposed** in his **heart** that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank."

Daniel determined beforehand that although it certainly came at a cost, he would remain faithful to God. He did not wait for extreme circumstances to decide and stand up for what he believed. The courageous faithfulness Daniel demonstrated as he was cast into a pit of lions was formed through what seemed like smaller acts of obedience beforehand...

Faithfulness in perilous and difficult moments is the fruit of faithfulness in the everyday walk of the believer.

On the other hand, we see in the other Israelite young men that those who repeatedly compromise in small matters are unlikely to suddenly become courageous when the cost of obedience becomes greater. Giving in to sin in seemingly small areas gradually prepares our hearts to fully bow to the pressures and demands of the world later.

2. Faithfulness Trusts God Even When the Outcome Is **Uncertain**

King Nebuchadnezzar commanded everyone to bow before the golden image he had constructed. Anyone who refused would be thrown into a burning fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship the image.

Daniel 3:17-18, "If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

They knew God could rescue them, but they did not presume He was obligated to do so. We see in their response that their obedience was not dependent upon receiving the outcome they desired...True faith does not say, "I will obey God if He protects me from suffering." It says, "I will obey God because He is God and He is worthy of my obedience, even if obedience leads me into suffering." In the end, God did not prevent them from being thrown into the furnace, but He was present with them in it.

Daniel 3:25, "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

→ God does not always keep His people from entering the fire, but He never abandons them in it.

3. Faithfulness **Continues** When It Becomes Costly

Years later, men who were jealous of Daniel's influence persuaded King Darius to issue a law forbidding anyone from praying to any god or person except the king for thirty days. Daniel knew that disobeying this law would result in being thrown into a den of lions, yet he did not allow this unexpected challenge to his faith to change his devotion to or trust in God.

Daniel 6:10, "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom **since early days**."

Daniel did not begin praying because the law was passed, nor did he stop praying because the decree was issued. He simply continued this act of submission to and faith in God because **he had decided already that his devotion to God was not determined or altered by outside influences or his circumstances**. His faithfulness in this crisis was the continuation of a life that had already been shaped by consistent devotion and faithfulness to God.

Daniel 6:26, "I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom *men must* tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He *is* the living God, And steadfast forever; His kingdom *is the one* which shall not be destroyed, And His dominion *shall endure* to the end."

Daniel's circumstances changed repeatedly throughout his life. Kings rose and fell, governments changed, and different challenges to Daniel's walk with God came and went. But Daniel remained faithful because he understood that the God he served was worthy and in control.

4. Faithfulness Is **Strengthened** by Future Hope

The final portion of Daniel contains visions that can be difficult to understand. These visions describe the rise and fall of kingdoms, coming persecution, and seasons of intense suffering for God's people. **Although difficult to fully understand, the central message is clear: earthly kingdoms and rulers will rise and fall, but evil will not reign forever, and God will ultimately establish His eternal kingdom.**

Daniel 7:13-14: "And behold, *One* like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom *the one* which shall not be destroyed."

Daniel's visions do not promise that God's people will avoid suffering, but they do promise that suffering will not have the final word. God will one day defeat evil, raise His people, judge the wicked, and establish a perfect kingdom that will never be destroyed, a kingdom where we will dwell with Him for all eternity, for our joy and His glory... **It is this truth that allows believers to face uncertainty, hardship, and persecution with faithfulness and hope. Because biblical hope is not wishful thinking; it is a confident expectation rooted in the promises and character of God. Because we can trust that all of His promises are true, we know how the story ends. And because the ending is certain, we can remain faithful in the uncertainty of the middle, as we wait for what is sure to come, our eternal home with God in Heaven.**

One Last Thing...

Remember, Daniel and his friends lived as exiles in a culture that pressured them to compromise their devotion to God. They did not know where their obedience would lead them, but they knew that God was worthy of their faithfulness... This same hope allows us to remain faithful today.

We can obey when compromise would be easier. We can trust God when the outcome is uncertain. We can endure suffering without losing heart. We can remain faithful in a world that opposes God because we know that evil will not win, suffering will not last forever, and Christ's kingdom will never be destroyed. Our hope in and the certainty of God's final victory should produce faithfulness in whatever our present and future circumstances may be.

Discussion Questions

1. Why are small acts of obedience important in preparing us for greater tests of faith?
2. What is significant about the words "But if not" in Daniel 3:18?
3. Are there ways in which your obedience to God has become dependent upon receiving the outcome you want?
4. What does Daniel's response in Daniel 6 teach us about developing consistent habits of faithfulness?
5. How does knowing that God will ultimately defeat evil and establish His kingdom help us endure present suffering?
6. Where are you presently being tempted to compromise, and how should your hope in God's final victory change your response?

Lesson 10: Ruth & Esther

Faithfulness for Such a Time as This: Two Women, Two Stories, One Faithful God

Opening Text - Esther 4:14

"Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" - Esther 4:14 (NKJV)

Ruth and Esther lived in completely different circumstances. Ruth was a foreign widow living in poverty; Esther was a Jewish orphan who became queen of Persia. Ruth worked in a field. Esther lived in a palace. Yet both show how God uses ordinary people who are faithful where He places them.

Neither woman could see the entire story God was writing. They simply trusted Him with the part directly in front of them.

1. RUTH - FAITHFUL WHEN LIFE DOESN'T MAKE SENSE

- Ruth's story begins with tragedy. Naomi's husband died, then both of her sons died, leaving Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah as widows. Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem and urged Ruth to remain in Moab.
→ *"Wherever you go, I will go... your people shall be my people, and your God, my God." - Ruth 1:16*
- Ruth had no husband, financial security, or guarantee of acceptance in Bethlehem. Yet she chose faithfulness rather than certainty.

Life Principle: Faithfulness doesn't require knowing how the story ends. It requires doing what is right in the chapter you're currently living.

Discuss: Why do we struggle to move forward when we don't know how things will turn out? Where might God simply be asking you to take the next faithful step?

2. RUTH - DON'T DESPISE SMALL BEGINNINGS

- When Ruth and Naomi arrived in Bethlehem, they had very little. Ruth went into the fields to glean grain left behind by harvesters. It was ordinary, difficult work - but it placed her in the field of Boaz.
→ *"And she happened to come to the part of the field belonging to Boaz..." - Ruth 2:3*
- From Ruth's perspective, it may have looked accidental. From God's perspective, it was providential. Boaz had already heard about Ruth's faithfulness to Naomi.
→ *"The LORD repay your work... under whose wings you have come for refuge." - Ruth 2:12*

Life Principle: What looks ordinary to us may be part of something extraordinary that God is arranging. Keep showing up. Keep doing what is right.

Discuss: Why do we underestimate small acts of faithfulness? What once seemed insignificant in your life but later became important?

3. RUTH - GOD IS A REDEEMER

- Boaz was more than a wealthy landowner. As a relative of Naomi's husband, he could serve as a kinsman-redeemer. Eventually Boaz married Ruth.
→ *"So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife..." - Ruth 4:13*
- Ruth had a son named Obed. Obed became the father of Jesse, and Jesse became the father of David.
→ *"And they called his name Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David." - Ruth 4:17*
- Ruth began as a foreigner, widow, and poor woman uncertain about her future. She became the great-grandmother of King David - and eventually part of the family line through which Jesus Christ came.

Life Principle: God can redeem chapters of our lives that once looked **hopeless. The painful chapter you're living may not be the final chapter God is writing.**

Discuss: What does Ruth teach us about God's ability to redeem difficult circumstances? Why is it dangerous to judge our entire story by the chapter we're currently living?

4. ESTHER - GOD MAY HAVE POSITIONED YOU ON PURPOSE

- Esther was a Jewish orphan raised by her cousin Mordecai. She eventually became queen of Persia. When Haman plotted the destruction of the Jewish people, Mordecai urged Esther to approach the king.
- The risk was enormous: approaching the king without being summoned could result in death.
→ *"Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" - Esther 4:14*
- Esther had to see her position differently. Maybe becoming queen wasn't merely about Esther. Maybe God had positioned her there for someone else.

Life Principle: God's blessings are often **opportunities for responsibility, not merely privileges for our enjoyment.**

- Your position, influence, resources, relationships, and experience may all have a purpose.

Discuss: Where has God given you influence? How would life change if we regularly asked, "God, why have You placed me here?"

5. ESTHER - **COURAGE** ISN'T THE ABSENCE OF FEAR

- Esther understood the danger. Before approaching the king, she called God's people to fast.
→ *"And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" - Esther 4:16*
- That was not recklessness. It was courage. Esther understood the risk but decided obedience was more important than comfort.

Courage isn't: "I'm not afraid." Courage is: "I'm afraid, but I'm going to do what is right anyway."

Discuss: What's the difference between courage and recklessness? Have you known the right thing to do but hesitated because you feared the consequences?

6. ESTHER - **PRAY FIRST, THEN MOVE**

- Before Esther approached the king, she called for a fast. She did not immediately rush into action. She prepared spiritually - and then she acted.

One mistake is praying but never acting. We keep asking God to do something He may be asking us to do.

Another mistake: we act without **praying**, relying entirely upon our own wisdom.

- Esther did both. She sought God, then stepped forward. The king received her, Haman's plot was exposed, and the Jewish people were delivered.

Life Principle: Faith knows when to kneel before God and when to stand before the king. Pray as though you desperately need God; then act as though obedience matters.

Discuss: Which tendency do you struggle with more - praying without acting or acting without praying? How can prayer prepare us for courageous decisions?

7. GOD IS **WORKING** EVEN WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE HIM

- One fascinating feature of Esther is that God's name is never directly mentioned. Yet His fingerprints are everywhere.
- Esther becomes queen. Mordecai overhears a plot against the king. His service is recorded. Later the king cannot sleep, the royal records are read, Mordecai's forgotten service is discovered, Haman's plans unravel, and Esther's courage changes history.

God doesn't have to be visible to be active. His silence does not mean His absence.

There are seasons when we clearly see what God is doing and seasons when we do not. Esther reminds us that providence can be working quietly behind circumstances we cannot explain.

Life Principle: Just because you cannot see God's hand doesn't mean God has stopped working.

Discuss: Why do we assume God isn't working when we can't see what He's doing? Have you looked backward and recognized His hand in circumstances you didn't understand at the time?

RUTH & ESTHER - TWO WOMEN, TWO ASSIGNMENTS

- **Ruth:** faithfulness in the ordinary - work the field, care for Naomi, keep showing up, trust God.
- **Esther:** courage in the extraordinary - approach the king, risk her position, speak for her people, trust God.

One woman's faithfulness looked quiet. The other's looked courageous and public. Sometimes God asks us to do something dramatic. Sometimes He asks us simply to remain faithful.

Both require faith.

THEIR STORIES IN FOUR WORDS

- 1. FAITHFULNESS** - Ruth did what was right without seeing the outcome.
- 2. PROVIDENCE** - God arranged circumstances neither woman could fully see.
- 3. COURAGE** - Esther stepped forward when silence was easier.
- 4. REDEMPTION** - God turned tragedy, uncertainty, and danger toward His purposes.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

1. Where do I need to simply be faithful?

Maybe you don't need a dramatic new direction. Maybe you need to keep doing what God has already placed in front of you.

2. What ordinary thing am I underestimating?

Ruth was gleaning grain. She had no idea God was writing her into the lineage of Christ. Don't underestimate ordinary obedience.

3. Where has God positioned me?

Your workplace. Your family. Your business. Your neighborhood. Your church. Your relationships. Maybe you're there for such a time as this.

4. Where do I need courage?

Is there something you know you should say or do, but fear has kept you silent? Courage does not require the absence of fear; it requires choosing obedience.

5. Am I praying before I move?

Seek God. Then act. Prayer is not a substitute for obedience, and action is not a substitute for dependence upon God.

6. Can I trust God when I can't see Him working?

Ruth couldn't see the ending. Esther couldn't see everything God was arranging. Neither can we. But we can trust the Author.

FINAL THOUGHTS

- Ruth had no idea that walking into a field would change history. Esther had no idea that becoming queen would one day place the survival of her people partly in her hands.
- They simply responded faithfully when their moments came.

Ruth teaches us: Be faithful in the ordinary.

Esther teaches us: Be courageous in the extraordinary.

Both teach us: Trust God with the outcome.

You may never fully understand why God has placed you where you are. But perhaps the better question isn't, "Why am I here?" Maybe it is:

"God, what would faithfulness look like right here?"

→ *"Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" - Esther 4:14 (NKJV)*

REMEMBER

Be faithful when you can't see the outcome.

Don't underestimate ordinary obedience.

Recognize that your position may have a purpose.

Choose courage when remaining silent would be easier.

Pray first - and then move.

Trust that God is working even when you cannot see His hand.

Lesson 11: Nehemiah

Theme Passage:

Romans 15:4 *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.*

Historical Context:

King Nebuchadnezzar took the young and impressive Jews captive when he destroyed the Temple and the City of Jerusalem in 605-587 BC. Babylon (modern-day Iraq) was later judged by GOD through the Persians (modern-day Iran). Nehemiah's burden was that though the Temple was rebuilt, the walls of Jerusalem were in disarray, making the city vulnerable.

- Zerubbabel was used by GOD to rebuild the Temple
- Ezra was used by GOD to restore worship

Ezra 7:10 *For Ezra had **prepared** his **heart** to **seek the Law of the LORD**, and to **do it**, and to **teach** statutes and ordinances in Israel.*

Pastor Jerry's personal notes on sermon prep:

Examine my own heart.

Exegete the text (know the passage well; context is crucial).

Explain the principles (how does the passage apply to 2026?).

Expect an obedient response.

- Nehemiah was used by GOD to reconstruct the walls

1 Corinthians 10:11-13 *Now all these things (Jews in OT) happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*

Reaction 1: **Overconfident** v12 I would never do what those Jews did

Reaction 2: **Overwhelmed** v13 I cannot live the way GOD expects me to

Lessons from Nehemiah:

Faith doesn't mean we are without **fear** Nehemiah 2:2

Faith doesn't mean we are without **plans** Nehemiah 2:5

→ Pray and plan, plan and pray

- In GOD's sovereign plan, He did not allow the wall to be rebuilt without opposition and conflict. Why is this important to know?
- A sword in one hand, a tool in the other

Problems within...

1. The Jews faced a food shortage
2. They had to mortgage their fields and houses to buy grain
3. Some borrowed money at a high rate to pay their taxes
4. To repay their creditors some had to sell their children into indentured slavery

Nehemiah 5:1-7 *And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. ²For there were those who said, "We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat and live." ³There were also some who said, "We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine." ⁴There were also those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our lands and vineyards. ⁵Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards." ⁶And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. ⁷After serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, "Each of you is exacting usury from his brother." So I called a great assembly against them.*

- Anyone can become angry, but being angry for the right reason, at the right person, and in the right way is a difficult challenge.

"As Christians we must of course repent of all the anger, malice, and self-will which allowed the discussion to become a quarrel at all...There is another question, did you fight fair? Or did we not quite unknowingly falsify the whole issue? *Did we pretend to be angry about one thing when we knew, or could have known, that our anger had a different and much less presentable cause? Did we pretend to be 'hurt' in our sensitive and tender feelings when envy, ungratified vanity, or self-will was our real trouble?* Such tactics often succeed. The other parties give in...We win by cheating; how shall we deal with it in others I am not sure; but we should be merciless to its first appearances in ourselves." -- C.S. Lewis

Correct motives, wrong tactics:

Nehemiah 13:25-26 *So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. ²⁶Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things.*

- Nehemiah's passion for GOD got the best of him, and the fellow Jews got the worst of him.
- Closing request from Nehemiah... Remember me, O my God, for _____!

Hebrews 6:10 *For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

Lesson 12: Review

Genesis 1-11

Creation

The Fall

The Flood

The Tower of Babel

- The remaining 39 chapters deal with four patriarchs and cover 200 years
 - Abraham / Isaac **Genesis 12-25**
 - Jacob **Genesis 26-36**
 - Joseph **Genesis 37-50**
- Abrahamic and Davidic Covenant (sacred promise)
- Conditional and Unconditional Covenants
- Jacob's name is changed to Israel, and he has twelve sons = The 12 **Tribes** of Israel
- Joseph and his suffering ... from prison to the palace... Prime Minister
 1. Brothers
 2. Boss's wife
 3. Butler and Baker
- Deliverance from Egyptian bondage (400 years) by Moses

Promised Land and Joshua

- *Is God A Moral Monster* by Paul Copan

The Judges

- They served over a 350-year span, during which the Tabernacle was established in Shiloh. (20 miles north of Jerusalem)
- The lifestyle of the people... *every man did that which was **right** in his **own eyes**.*

Proverbs 3:5-7 *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; ⁶In all your ways acknowledge Him And He shall direct your paths. ⁷Do not be **wise** in your **own eyes**; Fear the LORD and depart from evil.*

- The **fear of the Lord** is an understanding that GOD sees and knows everything about me and one day I will give account of myself to Him. This knowledge motivates me to know, love, and serve Him.

The Kings of Israel and Judah

- United Kingdom: **Saul, David, and Solomon**
- Divided Kingdom (re: gotquestions.org for list of Kings)
- Northern Kingdom (Israel) of 10 Tribes with capital in Samaria (19 Kings)
- Southern Kingdom (Judah) of 2 Tribes with capital in Jerusalem (20 Kings)
 - Assyria takes Israel captive in 721BC (Capital was **Nineveh**)
 - Babylon takes Judah captive starting 607BC, destroys Jerusalem in 587BC

The Prophets

1. They would **confront** Israel with their sin.
2. They would call Israel to repentance (See below Isaiah 1).
3. They would clarify coming judgment if they didn't repent.
4. They would confirm the promises of GOD for the Messianic Kingdom.

The life of a godly prophet wasn't easy; they had to fight discouragement due to the apparent success of false prophets who misled the Jewish people. The lack of spiritual interest of their fellow Jews resulted in persecution, imprisonment, and at times death.

Isaiah 1:1-3 *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. ²Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: "I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me; ³The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider."...*

Isaiah served under the administration of four kings for sixty years. (740-680BC)

Isaiah 1:16-18 *"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, ¹⁷Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow. ¹⁸"Come **now**, and let us **reason** together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. ¹⁹If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; ²⁰But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*

Major Lessons from the Minor Prophets. The Minor Prophets, sometimes referred to as "the Book of the Twelve," make up the final section of the Old Testament. They consist of Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

Three themes in the Minor Prophets work together to shape their core message. Bible scholars disagree about which theme is dominant, but most agree that each is important.

- **The first theme** highlights Israel's failure to keep the law.
- **The second theme** focuses on the day of the Lord, which ten out of the twelve Minor Prophets mention (e.g., Joel 1:15; 2:11; Amos 5:20). The day of the Lord is a future time when God will decisively intervene in world affairs, judging the unrighteous (e.g., Malachi 4:5) and blessing the righteous (e.g., Obadiah 1:15-18). The New Testament teaches that Pentecost foreshadowed the ultimate fulfillment of the day of the Lord (Acts 2:17-21), which will culminate with the second coming of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10).
- **The third theme** emphasizes the love of God. Finally, it's important to understand that the New Testament identifies Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. While the minor prophets looked forward with anticipation to the Messiah's arrival, Christians look back on it. As the New Testament affirms, the minor prophets testify to Jesus' birth (e.g., Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1), public ministry (e.g., Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:5), death (e.g., Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34-27), and resurrection (e.g., Jonah 2:10; Matthew 12:39-41). Jesus also taught that the Old Testament prophets testified about Him (Luke 18:31; 24:44-47).

The final passage of the Old Testament

→ **Malachi 4:5-6** *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. ⁶And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."*

- Malachi was a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah in the mid 400's BC
- The Intertestamental period, the Apocrypha Books
- The Jewish Celebration of Hanukkah (Chanukah)

The period from Nehemiah to Christ falls into four epochs: the period of Persian rule, until about 331BC; the period of Greek rule, under the Hellenistic successors of Alexander (first the Ptolemies of Egypt, then the Seleucids of Syria), until 143BC; the period of independence, under the Maccabean or Hasmonean dynasty, until 63BC; and the period of Roman rule thereafter. The ancient Jewish authorities for this period are the Antiquities and Jewish War of Josephus and the first two books of Maccabees.

Jesus and Hanukkah

- **The Gospel of John (10:22-23)** notes that it was winter and Jesus was walking in the temple courts during the Festival of Dedication

Jesus on the Road to Emmaus

→ **Luke 24:17-27** *And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" ¹⁸Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" ¹⁹And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. ²¹But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. ²²Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. ²³When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. ²⁴And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see." ²⁵Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the **Scriptures** the things concerning **Himself**.*

