

Adult Bible Study in Simplified English

# Study Guide



## Profiles in Character

WRITER: Marcia Miller

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# Adult Bible Study in Simplified English Study Guide

## Profiles in Character

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First edition: May 2011

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# Introduction

The Bible is God's Word to His people.

The Bible is a book of history, especially the history of the Hebrew people. It tells us how God's people lived.

The Bible is a book of law. It gives us rules to live by.

The Bible is a book of stories. It gives us examples of everyday people and the choices they made.

People in the Bible are people who lived everyday lives. Some of the people were well known. Some of the people in the Bible were good people. They lived by faith and honored God. Some of the people were not so good. They disobeyed God and lived by their own rules. Some of the people were evil. But God can even use evil people to fulfill His purpose.

In this Bible study, we will look at 15 life stories. All of these stories are from the Old Testament. Every life has a story to be told. The Bible is a series of people's stories. We celebrate these lives. We thank God for those who taught us how to live.

In these lessons, we will talk about people who lived by faith. They were people who had courage. They were people who did the right thing. From these stories, we will learn ways to follow their example. These stories will show us how to live by faith. We can learn to have courage. We can learn to do what is right.

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## **About the Writer**

*Marcia Miller wrote the Study Guide for Profiles in Character. She is a graduate of the University of Texas and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Marcia started doing missions as a young Girls' Auxiliary member at her home church, First Baptist Church, Dallas. She has served as a volunteer missionary in Canada and the United States. She has worked as a Service Corps Volunteer with the International Mission Board in Southeast Asia (Malaysia and Singapore) and in the Caribbean Christian Publications office, where she wrote and edited Sunday School lessons for young children and their teachers.*

# Overview

## *Profiles in Character*

Lesson 1	Women at Moses' Birth: Taking Action to Help Children	Exodus 1:15 to 2:10
Lesson 2	Moses: Seeking Good for Undeserving	Exodus 32:7-14, 30-34
Lesson 3	Caleb: Showing Courageous Faith	Numbers 13:25 to 14:10a
Lesson 4	The Sisters: Challenging Unfairness	Numbers 27:1-11
Lesson 5	Joshua: Leading by Following God	Joshua 24:1-3a, 13-27
Lesson 6	Deborah: Exercising Strong Leadership	Judges 4:1-16; 5:1-7
Lesson 7	Samuel: Being Faithful to the Highest Allegiance	1 Samuel 12:1-5, 13-25
Lesson 8	David and Nathan: Accepting Personal Responsibility for Sin	2 Samuel 11:2-15; 12:1-13a
Lesson 9	Amos: Facing Opposition Courageously	Amos 1:1-2; 2:6-16; 7:10-17
Lesson 10	Micaiah: Telling the Truth	1 Kings 22:6-28
Lesson 11	Huldah: Interpreting and Proclaiming God's Message	2 Chronicles 34:19-31
Lesson 12	Jeremiah: Being Faithful in the Depths of Despair	Jeremiah 20:7-18; 26:1-15
Lesson 13	Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: Giving Unlimited Devotion to God	Daniel 3
Lesson 14	Esther: Taking the Ultimate Risk	Esther 4:1-16
Lesson 15	Nehemiah: Standing Up for People	Nehemiah 2:1-5, 5:1-15

# Word List

## Lesson 1

**courage:** to face danger without fear

**faith:** total trust in God

**midwife, midwives:** a woman who helps women through the birth of their children, like a nurse

## Lesson 2

**contestant:** a person who is part of a contest

**idol:** something that is worshipped; a statue or carved image

**sin:** an act or thought that goes against the laws of God

## Lesson 3

**blessing:** God's special gifts to each person

**Canaan:** the land which would become Israel

**Promised Land:** the land God chose for His people; Canaan

## Lesson 4

**challenge:** to call into question

**discrimination:** treating one group of people differently than another

## Lesson 5

**commit, commitment, committing:** loyalty, dedication

**invitation:** an offer; a chance to join a group

## Lesson 6

**determination:** purpose

**restriction:** condition; something with limits

## Lesson 7

**allegiance:** loyalty to a country, person, cause or group

**bondage:** being forced into slavery

**declaration:** a formal statement of intent

**independence:** freedom from control

**pledge:** an oath or promise

## Lesson 8

**consequence:** the result of something that has happened; the result of a set of actions

**parable:** a short story with a moral or religious meaning

**personal responsibility:** accepting the consequences or results of an action

# Word List

## Lesson 9

**circuit:** a route; usually a circular path

**opposition:** disapproval shown by others

## Lesson 10

**extraordinary:** extra special

**ordinary:** plain; usual

## Lesson 11

**confidence:** faith in one's ability

**proclaimed:** to make something clear to another person

## Lesson 12

**devotion:** total commitment; loyalty

**fiery furnace:** a very hot, open-topped oven used to heat large areas, such as a house or public building

**unlimited:** without limits; with no boundaries; to no end

## Lesson 13

**perish:** to die

**repent:** to be sorry for

## Lesson 14

**harem:** a group of women who belong only to the king

**mourning:** to be sad because of tragedy; to show signs of grief, such as weeping or wearing black clothes

**ultimate risk:** to encounter the greatest danger or greatest chance of loss

## Lesson 15

**advocate:** someone who speaks up for another person, group or cause

**drought:** a long period of time when there is no rain, causing crops to fail; drought usually leads to famine

# Memory Verses

## Lesson 1

“Through faith we understand that the world was made by the Word of God. Things we see were made through what could not be seen.” (Hebrews 11:3)

## Lesson 2

“But I show loving-kindness to thousands of those who love Me and keep My Laws.” (Exodus 20:6)

## Lesson 3

“All these many people who have faith in God are around us like a cloud. Let us put every thing out of our lives that keep us from doing what we should. Let us keep running the race that God has planned for us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

## Lesson 4

“Wait on the Lord. Keep His way. And He will give you a high place to receive the land. When the sinful are cut off, you will see it.” (Psalm 37:34)

## Lesson 5

“If you think it is wrong to serve the Lord, choose today whom you will serve. ...But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.” (Joshua 24:15)

## Lesson 6

“Hear, O kings! Listen, O rulers! I will sing to the Lord. I will sing praise to the Lord, the God of Israel.” (Judges 5:3)

## Lesson 7

“Only fear the Lord and be faithful to worship Him with all your heart. Think of the great things He has done for you.” (1 Samuel 12:24)

## Lesson 8

“When death had power over your life you were not right with God. What good did you get from the things you are now ashamed? Those things bring death.” (Romans 6:1-2)

# Memory Verses

## Lesson 9

“Let what is good and what is right keep me safe, because I wait for you.” (Psalm 25:21)

## Lesson 10

“Those who are lost in sin will be fooled by the things he can do. They are lost in sin because they did not love the truth that would save them.” (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

## Lesson 11

“Preach the Word of God. Preach it when it is easy and people want to listen and when it is hard and people do not want to listen.

Preach it all the time. Use the Word of God to show people they are wrong. Use the Word of God to help them do right. You must be willing to wait for people to understand what you teach as you teach them.” (2 Timothy 4:2)

## Lesson 12

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not trust in your own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5)

## Lesson 13

“The One Who called you is faithful and will do what He has promised.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:24)

## Lesson 14

“Nothing should be done because of pride or thinking about yourself. Think of other people as more important than yourself. Do not always be thinking about your own plans only. Be happy to know what other people are doing.” (Philippians 2:3-4)

## Lesson 15

“Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you? He wants you to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him. He wants you to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deuteronomy 10:12)





Adult Bible Study in Simplified English

# Women at Moses' Birth: Taking Action to Help Children

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrote a book with the title, *It Takes a Village*. The idea of the book is that everyone should be involved in the lives of the children around them.

The title of the book comes from a Nigerian proverb. The proverb says, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." The proverb means the adults must realize the important role they have in children's lives. Other cultures have proverbs like this:

*A child does not grow up in a single home.*

*A child does not belong to one parent or one home.*

What does this mean to us? First, an entire neighborhood can take care that children are safe in that area. Second, adults can show they care about children's play areas and about their schools. Third, a community can work together to make sure children have healthy food and warm clothing.

Every child should be able to say, "I am loved." A child feels loved when the adults around him show they care.

## The Nurses Who Loved the Babies (Exodus 1:15-22)

Shiphrah and Puah were **midwives** among the Hebrew people. These two women may have been Egyptian or Hebrew. We know little about them, but there is one thing we do know: We know they had **courage**.

Pharaoh told the nurses to kill baby boys as soon as they were born. Baby girls could live, but he wanted the boys to die.

But Shiphrah and Puah refused to kill the baby boys. They told Pharaoh that the Hebrew women had their babies too fast.

### Bible Text

Exodus 1:15 to 2:10

### Memory Verse

"Through faith we understand that the world was made by the Word of God. Things we see were made through what could not be seen." (Hebrews 11:3)

### Word List

**courage:** to face danger without fear

**faith:** total trust in God

**midwife, midwives:** a woman who helps women through the birth of their children, like a nurse

**Things to  
Think About**

1. Is it ever right to break the law as Shiprah and Puah did? If so, when?
2. What are some examples of times when an adult should help to keep a child safe?
3. What are the names of some adults who helped you become the person that you are today?

The nurses did not have time to arrive to help. Therefore, the nurses did not have a chance to kill the babies.

Then Pharaoh said that the boy babies should be thrown into the Nile River. It took great courage to say no to Pharaoh, but that is exactly what Shiprah and Puah did.

Who was this Pharaoh? The word *Pharaoh* was not the name of the man. It was a title, like *king* or *emperor*. The Pharaoh was the ruler of Egypt with complete power over the people. He expected people to obey his rules.

Ancient Egypt's recorded history goes back thousands of years. History records a long list of Pharaohs' names. But we are not sure which Pharaoh ordered the baby boys to die. His name is lost. But we know the names of two brave nurses. God honored Shiprah and Puah for doing what was right.

**The Mother Who Loved Her Son (Exodus 2:1-3)**

When Pharaoh ordered the baby boys to be killed, some Hebrew mothers tried to hide their little boys. One of these women hid her baby for a few months. The baby grew until he was just too big to hide any longer. This mother's solution was to hide him—in plain sight.

The mother made a basket that would float. She made it waterproof so it would not leak. Then she put her baby in the basket and put the basket in the Nile River. She knew that many things could go wrong, but this seemed to be her only choice. It took courage to think of a way to hide her baby in a river basket.

**The Sister Who Loved Her Brother (Exodus 2:4)**

The baby boy in the basket had an older sister. The mother

gave her the job of watching the basket as it floated down the river. This young girl showed great courage as she secretly guarded her baby brother in his basket to make sure he was safe.

### **The King's Daughter Who Loved Children (Exodus 2:5-10)**

We don't know how long the baby boy floated down the river in his basket. We don't know how many hours or days the older sister kept watch. But one day, the daughter of Pharaoh came to the river. She saw the basket and discovered the baby. Her heart was touched with kindness toward the little baby. She wanted to raise the child in her home—Pharaoh's palace.

The baby's sister acted quickly. She came to the king's daughter and said she would get someone to nurse the baby. Then she ran home and got her mother.

It took courage for Pharaoh's daughter to take home a Hebrew male child. She was protecting a child that her father had said should die.

At this point in Exodus, the mother of the baby was not named. We learn her name in later Bible stories. Her name was Jochebed. The sister of the baby was not

named either. Only later do we learn her name was Miriam.

Years passed and Miriam grew up. She became a leader of the Hebrew women when the Hebrews left Egypt. She helped lead them as they traveled through the desert for 40 years.

But to this day, we do not know the name of the daughter of Pharaoh.

We do not know the Hebrew name of Jochebed's son. But in later Bible stories, we learn that his Egyptian name was Moses. He grew up in Pharaoh's palace and lived his young life in the king's court. He grew up having everything he wanted.

One day, he learned about the life of his birth parents. He learned what it was like to be a slave.

Moses was called by God. God used Moses to fulfill His promise. Moses grew up to have **faith** in the God of the Hebrews. He would lead God's people from Egypt to the Promised Land. God promised His people this land—we call that land Israel.

It took five women to give Moses a safe life. They acted with great courage. Because of their courage, Moses lived while other boy babies died. God used these

women to fulfill His purpose.

We are called to have faith in God.

There are times when people need courage to follow that faith. Our names might never be well-known. People might never see our names in the news, but we must always show our faith in God. We might be called to act with courage.

It takes courage to have faith. It takes faith to have courage.

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#### **Exodus 1:15 to 2:10**

**15** Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew nurses. The name of one was Shiphrah. The name of the other was Puah.

**16** He said, "When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth, and see the baby before the mother does, if it is a son, kill him. But if it is a daughter, let her live."

**17** But the nurses feared God. They did not do what the king of Egypt told them. They let the boys live.

**18** So the king of Egypt called the nurses and said to them, "Why have you done this, and let the boys live?"

**19** The nurses answered Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women. They are strong. They give birth before the nurse comes to them."

**20** So God was good to the nurses. And the people became many and strong.

**21** Because the nurses feared God, He gave them families.

**22** Then Pharaoh told all his people, "Throw every son who is born to the Hebrews into the Nile. But keep every daughter alive."

**2:1** Now a man of the family of Levi married a daughter of Levi.

**2** She was going to have a baby, and she gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was beautiful, she hid him for three months.

**3** But the time came when she could hide him no longer. So she took a basket made from grass, and covered it with tar and put the child in it. And she set it in the grass by the side of the Nile.

**4** His sister stayed to watch and find out what would happen to him.

**5** Then the daughter of Pharaoh came to wash herself in the Nile. Her young women walked beside the Nile. She saw the basket in the tall grass and sent the woman who served her to get it.

**6** She opened it and saw the child. The boy was crying. She had pity on him and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

**7** Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Should I go and call a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?"

**8** Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the girl went and called the child's mother.

**9** Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me. And I will pay you." So the woman took the child and nursed him.

**10** The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter. And he became her son. She gave him the name Moses, saying, "Because I took him out of the water."



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### **Bible Text**

Exodus 32:7-14,  
30-34

### **Memory Verse**

“But I show loving-kindness to thousands of those who love Me and keep My Laws.”  
(Exodus 20:6)

### **Word List**

**contestant:** a person who is part of a contest

**idol:** something that is worshipped; a statue or carved image

**sin:** an act or thought that goes against the laws of God

# Moses: Seeking Good for Undeserving People

“American Idol” is the #1 television show in the United States. This show is a talent competition, and singers perform each week. Judges comment on the acts. Viewers call in to vote for their favorite **contestant**. Each week the person with the lowest number of votes leaves the show.

Viewers watch as contestants leave. Their dreams are crushed. But there is great joy for the winner. Sometimes their success brings fame and fortune.

The character of the winners determines how they handle their success. They have more money than they need. They can buy houses, cars, and things they want. But they learn they cannot trust everyone. They must carefully choose their friends.

They cannot buy happiness. Happiness is not found in an object. Happiness is found in the Lord.

## **Doing What Is Right; Doing What Is Wrong (Exodus 32:7-14)**

Moses grew up in the palace of Pharaoh. He was the adopted son of Pharaoh’s daughter. Moses’ birth mother became his caretaker. Her name was Jochebed, and his father was Amram. They were both Hebrews. Their ancestor was from the tribe of Levi. The Levites were the Hebrew priests and singers. They were the worship leaders. They were the praise team.

Mother taught Moses about life as a Hebrew. It was important for Moses to know what it meant to be a slave.

**Things to Think About**

1. What things do you put between you and God?
2. Why is it important to obey the Laws of God?
3. What keeps you from obeying God’s Laws?

The Egyptians had many **idols**. They worshipped these idols. The Hebrews had only the one true God. Moses chose to believe in the God of the Hebrew people.

God had a special job for Moses. Moses was not eager because he did not think he was the right person for the job. He did not see himself as a leader. Moses told God to look for someone else to lead the Hebrews to a new land. Moses said his brother Aaron would do a better job. But God said Moses was His choice.

It took faith for Moses to follow God’s plan. It took courage for Moses to tell Pharaoh, “Let the people go.”

Years before, Moses had left his life of ease in the palace. He had become a shepherd, a caretaker of sheep. Now he returned to Egypt to become the leader of the slaves. He led God’s people from Egypt. They followed Moses into the desert. They were on their way to the land God promised them.

It was a joyful day when they left Egypt. No one liked being a slave. But the trip to the Promised Land was a long one.

The people of God were not happy. It is hard to keep people happy when life is difficult. The people whined. They complained. They expressed their discomfort.

So Moses went up a mountain, and God spoke to Moses. God gave Moses the Laws the people were to live by.

**What Happens When People Do What Is Wrong?  
(Exodus 34:30-34)**

The Hebrews decided they knew what would make them happy. They decided to take action. They thought they knew

what was best. But their decision led them to **sin**.

When Moses came down from the mountain, he saw what the people had done. He saw their great sin.

The people had made an idol — a golden calf. Now they were worshipping the calf. They knew God didn't want them to have idols. They knew they should only worship the one true God.

The first Law of God was “have no gods other than Me.” The people were told, “Do not make for yourselves a god to look like anything that is in heaven above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth” (Exodus 20:3-4).

But the people had melted their gold and shaped it into a calf. Then they started to worship their man-made idol.

Moses had seen God on the mountain. The people also wanted to see God, but they made their own god.

Moses was angry when he saw the idol. To make things worse, Moses' brother, Aaron, was the craftsman who shaped the golden calf. Moses saw himself as a failed leader.

God was angry with His people

because they had sinned. Moses told the people the results of their sin. The people repented, and the idol was destroyed. The people changed their hearts. They looked to God, and He forgave the people of their sin.

The people did not deserve to be forgiven. But God forgives all who ask to be forgiven because of His great love.

It is said, “Once saved, always saved.” Some people take this to mean that once you are saved, you can do whatever you want. It doesn't matter if you sin. You are saved. God will still love you.

This idea ignores this fact: Even if you are saved, you must go to God. You must ask Him to forgive you. You must meet God, the judge.

Sin is what keeps people from God. But not all sinners want to be found. A sinner meeting God must be ready for a changed life. Unhappy people live in sin. They are not listening to God. They are not depending on Him.

God tells His people how to live. When we listen to Him, He will show us His joy. True joy is found in God. Joy comes when we have faith in Him.

God loves us. He wants us to be

happy. But we can find true happiness only through Him.

We turn to God when we believe in Him. It takes faith to trust Him.

Some people deny that God exists. He cannot be seen. Therefore, they think He is not there. It takes courage to have faith in Someone who cannot be seen.

It takes faith to have courage. It takes courage to have faith.

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**Exodus 32:7-14, 30-34**

**7** Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go down. For your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, have turned to sin.

**8** They have been quick to turn aside from the way I have told them. They have melted gold and made a calf for themselves. They have worshiped it, have given gifts to it, and have said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!’”

**9** The Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, and see, they are a strong-willed people.

**10** Now let Me alone, so My anger may be against them and I may destroy them. But I will make you into a great nation.”

**11** Then Moses begged the Lord his God, saying, “O Lord, why are you very angry against Your people whom You brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and a

strong hand?

**12** Why should the Egyptians say, ‘He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and destroy them from the earth’? Turn from Your anger and change Your mind about destroying Your people.

**13** Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, who were your servants. You promised them by Yourself, saying, ‘I will make your children become as many as the stars of the heavens. And I will give all this land I have spoken about to your children. It will be theirs forever.’”

**14** So the Lord changed His mind about the things He said He would do to His people.

**30** The next day Moses said to the people, “You have sinned. Now I am going up to the Lord. It might be that I can have your sin forgiven.”

**31** Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, “O, this people have sinned. They have made a god of gold for themselves.

**32** But now, if You will, forgive their sin. If not, then take my name out of Your book which You have written.”

**33** The Lord said to Moses, “I will put out of My book whoever has sinned against Me.

**34** But go now. Lead the people where I told you. See, My angel will go before you. But in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin.”





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**Bible Text**

Numbers 13:25 to 14:10a

**Memory Verse**

“All these many people who have faith in God are around us like a cloud. Let us put every thing out of our lives that keep us from doing what we should. Let us keep running the race that God has planned for us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

**Word List**

**blessing:** God’s special gifts to each person

**Canaan:** the land which would become Israel

**Promised Land:** the land God chose for His people; Canaan

# Caleb: Showing Courageous Faith

Two cars left Dallas to go to Glorieta, New Mexico. The group spent the night in Lubbock. The next morning they began driving. They drove for an hour, but something seemed wrong. The cars pulled into a gas station. One of the teens got out of the car and asked the worker at the gas station, “Where are we?”

“This is Post, Texas,” he replied.

The group was on the right road, but they were going the wrong direction! They were traveling without a map. That mistake added an extra two hours to the trip.

Two teachers were driving from Dallas to Oklahoma City. They were leaving Dallas at a time when traffic was at its worse. They decided to go north on US 75. After they got to Oklahoma, they started diving west. They wanted to be on Interstate 35. The roads were winding. There were many hills. The two kept going west. Finally, they came to the interstate.

The Hebrews took a long time to reach their destination, too. They knew their direction, but they took many wrong roads. God provided a map, which was simply to obey and trust Him. But the Hebrews refused to follow it.

**Seeing the Promised Land (Numbers 13:25)**

The Hebrews traveled through the desert for about two years. They got near the land of Canaan, which was God’s **Promised Land**. They hadn’t entered **Canaan** yet, but they could see it from where they camped. Moses chose 12 Hebrew

**Things to  
Think About**

1. How can you best respond when you know God has a difficult task for you?
2. What blessings have you recently received?
3. How can “the land of milk and honey” have meaning to you?

men to cross into Canaan—one “spy” to represent every Israelite tribe. Moses sent the spies to report on what the land was like.

Two of the spies were Joshua and Caleb. Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim. Caleb was from the tribe of Judah. They had been friends for years. They were friends when they lived in Egypt. Now Joshua was an aide to Moses.

The spies crossed the border into Canaan. They spied on the army there. They saw how the economy worked. They saw how rich the land was. After 40 days, the 12 spies returned to Moses. All 12 saw the same things in Canaan, but they did not agree on what they saw.

**Reporting on the Promised Land (Numbers 13:26-33)**

Ten of the spies said that the people were like giants. They reported that the giants would crush the Israelites. These 10 spies said they were like grasshoppers when up against the giants. These 10 spies were ready to return to Egypt. They were afraid.

But two spies disagreed with the other 10. Joshua and Caleb said the land was very green. They said it would be good to live in Canaan, and they were eager to go forward. They were ready to live in the land God had promised His people.

Joshua and Caleb had faith. They knew God wanted the Israelites to live in Canaan. They trusted God and believed Him.

It took courage for Joshua and Caleb to speak against the other spies. However, they knew they were speaking the truth. They knew they were speaking for God.

Sadly, the people didn't have the same faith as Joshua and Caleb. Instead, they listened to 10 spies. They were afraid of the giants. The people were afraid to enter the land. They were so

afraid that they wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb.

**Rebelling Against God (Numbers 14:1-4)**

The people met. They listened to the 10 spies and believed what they said. The 10 spies didn't want to enter this unknown land. They taught the people to be afraid.

Then the people spoke out against Moses and Aaron. They wanted to select a new leader. They even wanted to go back to Egypt! They said it would be easier to live as a slave than to go into this new land.

Joshua and Caleb pleaded with the people. They reminded the people that God gives only the best to those He loves. They said entering Canaan would be entering the land of milk and honey.

Moses and Aaron tried to persuade the people. They tried to reason with the Hebrews, but the people wouldn't listen. They refused to hear Joshua and Caleb. They turned their backs on God and returned to their lives of sin.

**Facing God's Anger (Numbers 14:5-10)**

God became very angry with His people. He was ready to give up on them. God was so angry that He wanted to kill all

the Hebrews. But Moses wanted God to give the people another chance. He begged God to forgive the people.

God forgave the people. But there was a price to pay for their disobedience. Their sin kept the people from entering Canaan. Only Caleb and Joshua entered the "land of milk and honey." The people went back to the desert. They wandered for 40 years. All of the elders died. In time, a new generation entered the Promised Land.

The people had been afraid of unknown giants. Why weren't they afraid of the great anger of God? Their fear was really a lack of faith and trust in God.

Because of their fear, they lost out on the biggest  **blessing**  of their lives.

**Accepting God's Call**

God calls us to serve Him. We each have certain tasks to do. It takes faith to follow His calling. Some tasks are easy, and some are a lot of fun. But some are very difficult. Often it takes a lot of courage to follow Him.

We must go where He calls us to go. We must do what He tells us to do. When we do what He asks of us, He will bless us.

It takes faith to have courage. It takes courage to have faith.

**Numbers 13:25 to 14:10a**

**13:25** They returned from looking over the land after forty days.

**26** And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the people of Israel in the desert of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought news to them and to all the people, and showed them the fruit of the land.

**27** They told Moses, “We went to the land where you sent us. It does flow with milk and honey. This is its fruit.

**28** But the people who live in the land are strong. The cities have walls and are very large. And we saw the children of Anak there.

**29** Amalek is living in the land of the Negev. The Hittites and Jebusites and Amorites are living in the hill country. And the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan.”

**30** Then Caleb told the people in front of Moses to be quiet. And he said, “Let us go up at once and take the land. For we are well able to take it in battle.”

**31** But the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go against the people. They are too strong for us.”

**32** So they brought the people of Israel bad news about the land they had spied out, saying, “The land we have gone to spy out is a land that destroys those who go there to live. All the people we saw in it are very large.

**33** We saw the Nephilim there. (The sons of

Anak are part of the Nephilim.) We looked like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.”

**14:1** Then all the people cried out with a loud voice, and they cried that night.

**2** All the people of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this desert!

**3** Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to be killed by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will be taken away. Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?”

**4** So they said to one another, “Let us choose a leader and return to Egypt.”

**5** Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in front of all the gathering of the people of Israel.

**6** And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh tore their clothes. They were among those who had spied out the land.

**7** They said to all the people of Israel, “The land we passed through to spy out is a very good land.

**8** If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us. It is a land which flows with milk and honey.

**9** Only do not go against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land. For they will be our food. They have no way to keep safe, and the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.”

**10** But all the people said to throw stones at Joshua and Caleb. Then the shining-greatness of the Lord was seen in the meeting tent by all the people of Israel.



Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English

### **Bible Text**

Numbers 27:1-11

### **Memory Verse**

“Wait on the Lord.  
Keep His way. And  
He will give you a  
high place to receive  
the land. When the  
sinful are cut off,  
you will see it.”  
(Psalm 37:34)

### **Word List**

**challenge:** to call into  
question

**discrimination:**  
treating one group of  
people differently  
than another

# The Sisters: Challenging Unfairness

Kay owned a newspaper. She was the editor, and she worked hard. The number of readers increased. As the business grew, more space was needed.

Kay wanted to buy an office for her newspaper. She wanted the building’s title to be in her name. It was her business, so it should be her building. But Kay could not own property by herself. The law stated that her husband had to buy the property with her.

Kay went to court. She asked the judge to let her buy the building. The judge signed a paper. The paper set Kay free to own property. The paper said Kay could own her building.

This happened in Texas in 1950. In 1967, the law changed. The Texas Marital Property Act passed. This law made it legal for married women to own property.

### **Five Daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1)**

It took about two years for the Hebrews to go from Egypt to Canaan. This is where they were to live. This would be the beginning of a new life for God’s people. This was the land God was giving them, and it was to be their new home.

The people camped outside their new land. Moses sent 12 men into Canaan to see the land God promised them. They were to see how strong the Canaanite army was. They were to look for economic chances. They were to give a report to Moses. They were to tell him what the land was like.

**Things to Think About**

1. Does God care about discrimination?
2. When is it right to challenge a law?
3. What is the difference between disobeying a law and challenging a law?

Ten of the men came back with a bad report. They said the people were giants. They said the Hebrew army could not defeat the giants.

Caleb and Joshua came back with a good report. They said the land was very green. They said it would be good place to live.

The Hebrews listened to the 10 men. They were ready to travel back to Egypt. They were ready to become slaves again.

This bad report angered God. He would not allow the Hebrews to return to Egypt. They were punished. They wandered through the desert for 40 years.

Forty years later, all the men who refused God's gift died. Caleb and Joshua lived. They gave the good report. They lived long enough to enter the Promised Land.

The land was divided into 11 parts, one part for each of the 11 tribes of Israel. Each adult male was given part of his tribe's land. The Levites were the priests and the choir, so they did not need land. The other tribes cared for the Levites.

One of the men who died without seeing Canaan was Zelophehad. Zelophehad's sons would have inherited his land. However, he had no sons. He had five daughters: Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

The sisters did not have anything. They were homeless with no place to go. There was no one to take care of them. They did not know what to do.

Women were not allowed to inherit land. It was not a fair law. This was an early example of **discrimination**. Without their father, the sisters had no rights to the land. They didn't belong anywhere.

### **The Sisters Go to Court (Numbers 27:1-7)**

The sisters united, and they went into action. They had no one to speak for them so they chose to speak for themselves.

The sisters went to court. They asked that the rule be changed. They said they should inherit their father's land.

The sisters came to the judges meekly. They were honest as they appeared before the court. The sisters showed respect to the judges as well as respect for Hebrew traditions.

Also, the sisters showed respect for their father's memory. It was good for them to have land in his name. Their ownership of the land would allow their father's name to continue. Continuing the family line was important to the Hebrew culture.

Zelophehad's daughters honored their father's name by seeking to change the law.

### **The Judges Rule (Numbers 27:8-11)**

The judges considered the case. They ruled in favor of the daughters. They said that daughters have the right to inherit land from their father.

This case changed the civil law of Israel. Because of the daughters of Zelophehad, it was decided that:

1. The sons would inherit the land.
2. If there were no sons, the daughters would inherit.
3. If there were no daughters, the man's brother would inherit.
4. If there were no brothers, the paternal uncles would inherit.

It took courage for the sisters to go to court. It took courage for them to **challenge** the law.

The sisters had faith in God's power. They took Him at His word: He had promised the land to His people. The sisters believed that promise included them.

It took faith in God to believe they were right to challenge the law.

Not all laws are fair. Not all laws are reasonable. There are times when a law should be challenged. Challenging a law takes courage. But always, the challenge should be done with respect.

Challenging a law must be a well-planned act. Unexpected or unplanned results should be thought about carefully as plans are considered.

It takes courage to have faith. It takes faith to have courage.

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### Numbers 27:1-11

**1** Then came the daughters of Zelophehad the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, from the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph. The names of his daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah.

**2** They stood in front of Moses and Eleazar the religious leader, and the leaders, and all the people at the door of the meeting tent. The daughters said,

**3** “Our father died in the desert. He was not one of those who gathered together with Korah against the Lord. But he died for his own sin, and he had no sons.

**4** Why should the name of our father be taken away from his family because he had no son? Give us land among our father’s brothers.”

**5** Moses asked the Lord what should be done.

**6** Then the Lord said to Moses,

**7** “The daughters of Zelophehad are right in what they say. Be sure to give them their own land among their father’s brothers. Give them what would have been given to their father.

**8** And say to the people of Israel, ‘If a man dies and has no son, then give what belongs to him to his daughter.

**9** If he has no daughter, then give what belongs to him to his brothers.

**10** If he has no brothers, give what belongs to him to his father’s brothers.

**11** And if his father has no brothers, then you must give what belongs to him to the nearest person in his own family and it will be his. This will be a Law to the people of Israel, just as the Lord told Moses.’”





Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English

### Bible Text

Joshua 24:1-3a, 13-27

### Memory Verse

“If you think it is wrong to serve the Lord, choose today whom you will serve. ...But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”  
(Joshua 24:15)

### Word List

**commit,**  
**commitment,**  
**committing:** loyalty, dedication  
**invitation:** an offer; a chance to join a group

## Joshua: Leading by Following God

In many churches, the worship service ends with an **invitation**. The tradition is that music is played, and people go to the front of the church. They tell the pastor that they want to become members of the church.

Sometimes the people are moving from one church to another church. Other times, the people are saying they want to be baptized. They want to follow Jesus as Lord. They are **committing** their lives to God. This should be a very quiet time. People pray. It is a holy time. It is a time to listen to God.

But in one church, the people began to leave in the middle of the invitation. They wanted to get to the restaurant before the crowd. Others were in a hurry to pick up their children from the nursery. Still others wanted to get to the football game before kick-off. It became a habit.

Leaving church early was disruptive. They tried to leave quietly, but it was distracting to the importance of the moment.

This bothered the pastor of the church. The entire worship service was important. Giving people a chance to respond to God at the end was as important as singing praises at the beginning. The invitation was the final act of worship.

Nothing should keep a person from a moment of decision with God. The pastor knew this habit of leaving early had to end. He had to act. He needed to show his leadership skills.

One Sunday morning, the pastor finished his sermon. As

**Things to Think About**

1. What difference did Joshua make to the early history of Israel?
2. Have you made a total commitment to God?
3. How can you lead others to God by the way you live?

he started the invitation, he invited everyone to stay. He spoke of the importance of the invitation. The invitation is time with God. Nothing should keep God from speaking to their hearts.

No one left church early that Sunday morning. No one wanted to walk out on God.

**Joshua Calls the People Together (Joshua 24:1-3a)**

Joshua had lived a long life. He had been a slave in Egypt. He had been an aide to Moses. Joshua had worked with Aaron and Caleb. He was one of the two spies who gave a good report on Canaan. He led the army at the Battle of Jericho, then he entered into the Promise Land. Now Joshua was old, and it was time for him to die.

Joshua had some final words for God’s people. He wanted to remind them who they were. They were God’s Chosen People.

Joshua spoke as the spiritual leader of the people. He was no longer the warrior. He was no longer the peacemaker. He wanted to speak about the things that mattered most.

**Joshua’s Final Address (Joshua 24:13-27)**

Joshua reminded the people that they had a choice. They could follow other gods. Or they could choose to follow the one true God.

Choosing God meant giving up the old sinful ways. It meant giving up gods made of gold or clay. It meant giving up a god that could be seen and touched. It would be difficult for the people. But God would be with those who chose Him.

He would provide the things in life that they needed. He did not promise to give everything that they wanted. He did not

promise an easy life. But the Israelites were used to living a difficult life.

The choice had to be made. It had to be a total **commitment**. The commitment was for life. Joshua publicly dedicated his family to God. He urged others to make the same dedication. Because of Joshua's strong leadership, the people came to God.

It takes faith to trust God. Sometimes it takes courage to believe in Him. As a country, Israel came to God. They committed their lives and hearts to Him.

A commitment is a long-term agreement. A commitment to God lasts forever. A person cannot say, "I will follow God for two years. Then I will do as I please for the next two years."

A person cannot say, "I will be good for a while. If I sin, it doesn't matter. God will forgive me."

It's true that God will forgive all sin. But it's not good to sin just because you know you will be forgiven. "Because I can" is not a good defense.

Deciding to follow God is a choice. At some time, each person must make the choice. The choice must be clear.

Having faith in God is a courageous

thing. A person must live so that others must see a person's commitment to God.

Showing this commitment is an act of faith:

- A pastor leads his church members to bring others to church so they can come to know Jesus.
- A mother takes her children to the park to play. As she watches the children play, she talks with other mothers about God's love.
- An office worker refuses to listen to the latest gossip. She doesn't repeat the most recent rumors. She leads the talk to include positive ideas.

An old hymn reminds us, "Let others see Jesus in you. Keep telling the story, be faithful and true. Let others see Jesus in you."

In some countries, it is against the law to talk about God. Christians cannot openly speak of Jesus. They cannot spread the Gospel in traditional ways. But they can live for Him. They can show their neighbors the joy of loving God.

It takes faith to have courage. It takes courage to have faith.

### Joshua 24:1-3a, 13-27

**1** Then Joshua gathered all the families of Israel to Shechem. He called for the leaders of Israel, the heads of the families and those who judged between what is right or wrong. And they showed themselves before God.

**2** Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Long ago your fathers lived on the other side of the River. There was Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor. And they worshiped other gods.

**3** Then I took your father Abraham from the other side of the River.

**13** I gave you a land you did not work for. You live in cities you did not build. You are eating from vines and olive trees you did not plant.’

**14** “So fear the Lord. Serve Him in faith and truth. Put away the gods your fathers served on the other side of the river and in Egypt. Serve the Lord.

**15** If you think it is wrong to serve the Lord, choose today whom you will serve. Choose the gods your fathers worshiped on the other side of the river, or choose the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”

**16** The people answered, “May it never be that we turn away from the Lord and serve other gods.

**17** For the Lord our God is the One Who brought us and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house where we were made to work. He did these powerful works in front of our eyes. He kept us safe everywhere we went,

among all the nations we passed through.

**18** The Lord drove away from in front of us all the nations, even the Amorites who lived in the land. So we will serve the Lord. For He is our God.”

**19** Then Joshua said to the people, “You will not be able to serve the Lord. For He is a holy God. He is a jealous God. He will not forgive your wrong-doing or your sins.

**20** If you turn away from the Lord and serve strange gods, He will turn and punish you. He will destroy you after He has been good to you.”

**21** The people said to Joshua, “Not so, for we will serve the Lord.”

**22** Then Joshua said to the people, “You have spoken for yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord.” And they said, “We have spoken for ourselves.”

**23** Joshua said, “So put away the strange gods that are among you. Give your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel.”

**24** The people said to Joshua, “We will serve the Lord our God. We will obey His voice.”

**25** So Joshua made an agreement with the people that day. And he made Laws for them in Shechem.

**26** Joshua wrote these words in the book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the tree that was by the holy place of the Lord.

**27** Joshua said to all the people, “See, this stone will be here to speak against us. For it has heard all the words the Lord spoke to us. So it will be here to speak against you, if you do not stay true to your God.”



Adult Bible Study in Simplified English

# Deborah: Exercising Strong Leadership

To be the first woman to do something takes courage. To be a judge takes courage. Consider these female judges:

- Esther Morris was the first woman to become a judge in the United States. Wyoming Governor John Campbell Eager appointed her as a Justice of the Peace in 1870. This was the year after Wyoming voted to allow women the right to vote.
- Florence E. Allen was the first female Federal Judge.
- In Texas, Sarah T. Hughes was the first woman District Judge. She is the only woman to swear in a U.S. president—Lyndon B. Johnson after John F. Kennedy’s assassination.
- Jane Bolin was the first African-American woman to become a judge. She was appointed to the New York Domestic Relations Court in 1939.
- In 1981, Sandra Day O’Conner became the first woman appointed to the United States Supreme Court.
- Dolly M. Gee was the first Chinese-American woman to become a judge. She became a District Judge in 2009.
- In 2009, Sonja Sotomayor became the first Puerto-Rican woman to be a justice of the United States Supreme Court.

Sarah T. Hughes, the Texas judge, said, “Pick out your goal, then use **determination** and courage to reach it.”

### **Deborah, the Woman Judge (Judges 4:1-11)**

Deborah was a judge. People came to her to settle their fights. She listened to the problems of others and gave advice.

### **Bible Text**

Judges 4:1-16; 5:1-7

### **Memory Verse**

“Hear, O kings!  
Listen, O rulers! I  
will sing to the Lord.  
I will sing praise to  
the Lord, the God of  
Israel.” (Judges 5:3)

### **Word List**

**determination:**

purpose

**restriction:**

condition; something  
with limits

**Things to Think About**

1. Have you been afraid to do something you knew God wanted you to do?
2. How do women serve God in your church?
3. How do you serve Him?

She was married to Lappidoth. Deborah was called “a mother of Israel” because people came to her for advice. She guided them as a mother guides her children.

She was also a prophetess. She didn’t foretell the future. She wasn’t that sort of prophetess. She received messages from God. She told people what God wanted them to do.

**900 Iron Chariots (Judges 4:12-16)**

God spoke to Deborah. The message was for Barak, the head of the army. His name meant “lightning.”

God wanted Barak to march the army to Mount Tabor. This was an army of 10,000 men. They were to fight Sisera, the leader of the Canaanite army. His army had 900 iron chariots.

But Barak was afraid. He didn’t have faith. He didn’t believe his army could defeat an army with so many chariots.

Barak said he would do what God said. But he put a **restriction** on going to war. He said he would go if Deborah went with him. Deborah called Barak a coward. She said he lacked courage.

Deborah said if she went into the battle, Barak would win. Deborah said a woman would kill Sisera.

There was a man named Heber who was a blacksmith. His wife was Jael. Heber put up his tent near Mount Tabor. They were close to the fighting. Heber and Jael could see the battle. They wanted Barak to win.

Sisera’s army got close to the mountain. It was time to begin fighting. Deborah gave the order to charge. God kept His word. The Israelite army defeated the mighty army with 900 iron chariots.

Sisera saw what was happening and was afraid. He left his chariot and ran away.

Jael saw Sisera running away from the battle. She invited him into her tent and offered him a drink. The drink made Sisera tired. While he slept, Jael smashed Sisera in the head. Jael—a woman—killed Sisera.

When Barak came to the tent, Jael showed Barak that Sisera was dead.

Jael was brave, and she had faith. She wanted to do what God would have her do when the time was right.

God will tell us what to do. He will always see us through the battles we face.

Barak was afraid. His fear kept him from obeying God. Barak needed to have faith in God. Barak’s lack of faith kept him from being a hero.

God spoke. Deborah listened. Deborah had faith. Deborah acted as God wanted her to do. The battle was won.

An evil man was killed. A great army was defeated. God used a woman to win the day.

**Deborah’s Song (Judges 5:1-7)**

Deborah gave thanks to God. She

thanked Him for helping them. She thanked Him for watching over them. She praised His name.

God heard Deborah’s song and was pleased. He gave the people 40 years of peace in Israel.

It pleases God when we thank Him for what He has done. We can never give God more than He has given us.

A cry to God makes possible that which seems impossible. When we pray, God hears and answers our prayers.

Sometimes, we are led to do something difficult. Sometimes, we are afraid. Faith in God and in His Word can help us overcome that fear.

Sometimes, we think we are alone. However, God is always with us. He is able to support us in every condition.

We can have the faith to do what God leads us to do. Faith can make the best of even the worst events.

It takes courage to have faith. It takes faith to have courage.

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**Judges 4:1-16, 5:1-7**

**4:1** After Ehud died, the people of Israel sinned in the eyes of the Lord again.

**2** So the Lord let them be taken by Jabin king

of Canaan, who ruled in Hazor. The head of his army was Sisera, who lived in Haroshethgoyim.

**3** The people of Israel cried to the Lord, for Jabin had 900 iron war-wagons. He made it very hard for the people of Israel for twenty years.

**4** Now Lappidoth's wife Deborah, a woman who spoke for God, was judging Israel at that time.

**5** She would sit under the tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim. And the people of Israel came to her to find out what was right or wrong.

**6** She sent for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedeshnaphtali, and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says, 'Go to Mount Tabor. Take with you 10,000 men from the sons of Naphtali and Zebulun.

**7** I will have Sisera, the head of Jabin's army, meet you at the river Kishon. He will have his war-wagons and his many soldiers with him. But I will give him into your hand."

**8** Then Barak said to her, "I will go if you go with me. But if you do not go with me, I will not go."

**9** And she said, "For sure I will go with you. But the honor will not be yours as you go on your way. For the Lord will sell Sisera into the hands of a woman." Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh.

**10** Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to come to Kedesh. He went up with 10,000 men. And Deborah went up with him.

**11** Now Heber the Kenite had gone away from the Kenites, from the sons of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses. He had put up his tent as far away as the big tree in Zaananim, near Kedesh.

**12** They told Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor.

**13** Sisera gathered together all his 900 iron war-wagons. He gathered together all the people who were with him, from Haroshethgoyim to the river Kishon.

**14** Deborah said to Barak, "Get up! For this is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. See, the Lord has gone out before you." So Barak went down from Mount Tabor, and 10,000 men followed him.

**15** The Lord brought trouble upon Sisera and all his war-wagons and all his army in front of Barak with the sword. Sisera got down from his war-wagon and ran away on foot.

**16** But Barak went after the war-wagons and the army as far as Haroshethgoyim. All of Sisera's army fell by the sword. Not one was left.

**5:1** That day Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam sang this song:

**2** "The leaders led in Israel. The people were willing to help them. For this we give thanks to the Lord!

**3** Hear, O kings! Listen, O rulers! I will sing to the Lord. I will sing praise to the Lord, the God of Israel.

**4** Lord, You went out from Seir. You walked from the field of Edom. And the earth shook. Water fell from the heavens. Yes, water fell from the clouds.

**5** The mountains shook before the Lord. Mount Sinai shook before the Lord, the God of Israel.

**6** "In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the wide roads were empty. Travelers walked on the side roads.

**7** Country towns were empty. They were no more in Israel, until I, Deborah, came. I came as a mother in Israel."





Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English

### Bible Text

1 Samuel 12:1-5,  
13-25

### Memory Verse

“Only fear the Lord  
and be faithful to  
worship Him with all  
your heart. Think of  
the great things He  
has done for you.”  
(1 Samuel 12:24)

### Word List

**allegiance:** loyalty to  
a country, person,  
cause or group

**bondage:** being  
forced into slavery

**declaration:** a formal  
statement of intent

**independence:**  
freedom from control

**pledge:** an oath or  
promise

# Samuel: Being Faithful to the Highest Allegiance

On July 4, 1776, a group of men met in Philadelphia. They signed the **Declaration of Independence**. This paper was a declaration of war against King George III of England. From this declaration came the United States of America.

Fifty-six men declared themselves. They represented 13 colonies. The risk was great. Victory was not certain. The British army was ready for battle. But the colonists were not prepared.

Some people had a great desire for freedom from England. It took courage to go to war against the British. But not all the colonists wanted to take that risk. They were satisfied with the lives they had. They didn't have faith that the war could be won.

Battles were fought. The British won some. The colonists won some. Men died, and freedom was won. Eventually, the United States of America became a country.

### **Samuel's Farewell Address (1 Samuel 12:1-5)**

Samuel was three years old when he was first mentioned in the Bible. His entire life had been one of serving God and His people. Now he was an old man. It was time for him to retire.

Samuel reminded the people of his life story. He served the people with honor. He was faithful in all that he did. He saw that his sons had sinned and stood behind them. He supported them, but he didn't use his influence to get them out of trouble.

He didn't sell favors to his friends. They didn't get special

**Things to  
Think About**

1. What do you pledge allegiance to?
2. What is the greatest of all allegiances?
3. What great things have you seen God do?

privileges because they were his friends. He was not a rich man.

It took courage for Samuel to be a strong leader. He could have rescued his sons. He could have gotten rewards for his friends. He could have made a lot of money.

Instead, Samuel chose to be faithful to God.

**Samuel Prayed for a Miracle (1 Samuel 12:13-19)**

Samuel told the people to be careful of sin in the future. God will forgive, but there is a limit to His patience.

The people had sinned when they asked for a king to rule over them. They wanted to be ruled by a king rather than by God. Now Samuel reminded them of their sin. He told them that God wanted them to be faithful to Him, to listen to His voice. They needed to be reminded of God's power.

So Samuel prayed for a miracle. When Samuel spoke to the people, it was summer. Harvest time was near. It was probably late July or early August. The people were living in a desert. It never rained at this time of year. But now, Samuel asked God to make it rain.

God sent a great rain and mighty thunder. This never happened during the summer. God was ready to prove that He is powerful. He listens and answers prayer. He helps sinners.

It's a good thing to see a miracle as it happens. This is watching God at work. He shows people that He is in control.

Samuel had done many good things for the people. He was a leader, but he did not take the place of God. He pointed the people to God.

### **Samuel Asked the People to Stay True to Their God (1 Samuel 12:20-22)**

Samuel warned against worshipping other gods. They had done this in the past. God forgave the past sin, but the people should not sin again. Samuel promised to pray for God's people.

### **Samuel Warned the People about the Future (1 Samuel 12:23-25)**

God chose the Hebrews to be His people. His choice wasn't based on them being a wonderful group of people. Throughout history, He had rescued them again and again. He continued to do this because they were His "team." A coach doesn't fire the whole team in the middle of the season! Instead, he cares and trains the players to be better than before.

Even now, God will not give up on His people, His followers. He will continue loving us. He will continue having us learn from history.

Samuel told the people to remember the past. God allowed His people to become slaves. The Israelites were in **bondage** to the Egyptians. Hundreds of years later, they were in bondage to the Babylonians. It happened before. It could

happen again.

Samuel had many of the character qualities of a Christian:

- A person who loves God prays for others.
- They teach what is right and what is wrong. They remind people that God has said, "I am with you."
- A true believer in God fears Him. They know Him. They love Him. They respect Him. They show reverence.
- A person who loves God serves Him. They serve the people around them.
- A true believer is honest in all things. Every action must be sincere.

God still performs miracles. Watch as great things happen. It's good to learn from the past. History teaches us what happens when we sin.

As Samuel reminded the people, "Look at your own life. Learn from your own mistakes." There are immediate benefits to living a life following God:

- Happiness comes by following God.
- Power comes from loving God.
- Kindness comes while serving God.
- Compassion comes while reaching out to others.

It takes faith to have courage. It takes courage to have faith.

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**1 Samuel 12:1-5, 13-25**

**1** Then Samuel said to all Israel, “See, I have listened to all you have said to me. I have chosen a king to rule over you.

**2** Now see, the king walks in front of you. But I am old. My hair is growing white. See, my sons are with you. I have walked in front of you since I was young, until this day.

**3** Here I am. Speak against me to the Lord and Saul His chosen one. Whose bull have I taken? Whose donkey have I taken? To whom have I not been honest? For whom have I made it hard? From whose hand have I taken pay for closing my eyes to the truth? I will return it to you.”

**4** They said, “You have always been honest with us. You have not made it hard for us, or taken anything from any man’s hand.”

**5** Samuel said to them, “The Lord has heard you. And His chosen one has heard this day that you have found nothing in my hand.” And they said, “The Lord has heard.”

**13** Now see the king you have chosen, the king you have asked for. See, the Lord has given you a king.

**14** Fear the Lord and worship Him. Listen to His voice and do not go against the Word of the Lord. If both you and the king who rules over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well.

**15** But if you will not listen to the voice of the

Lord, and go against the Lord’s Word, then the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers.

**16** Now stand still and see this great thing which the Lord will do in front of your eyes.

**17** Is it not the time to gather grain today? I will call to the Lord, and He will send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that you have done a bad sin in the eyes of the Lord by asking for a king.”

**18** So Samuel called to the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day. And all the people were very much afraid of the Lord and Samuel.

**19** Then all the people said to Samuel, “Pray to the Lord your God for your servants, so we will not die. For we have added to all our sins this bad thing, to ask for a king.”

**20** Samuel said to the people, “Do not be afraid. You have done all these sins. But do not turn aside from following the Lord. Worship the Lord with all your heart.

**21** Do not turn aside after things that have no worth and cannot save you, for they are nothing.

**22** The Lord will not leave His people alone, because of His great name. The Lord has been pleased to make you His people.

**23** And as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by not praying for you. But I will teach you the good and the right way.

**24** Only fear the Lord and be faithful to worship Him with all your heart. Think of the great things He has done for you.

**25** But if you still sin, both you and your king will be destroyed.”



*Adult Bible Study in Simplified English*

**Bible Text**

2 Samuel 11:2-15;  
12:1-13a

**Memory Verse**

“When death had power over your life you were not right with God. What good did you get from the things you are now ashamed? Those things bring death.”  
(Romans 6:1-2)

**Word List**

**consequence:** the result of something that has happened; the result of a set of actions

**parable:** a short story with a moral or religious meaning

**personal responsibility:** accepting the consequences or results of an action

# David and Nathan: Accepting Personal Responsibility for Sin

In 1979, the State of California charged Dan White with the murders of George Mascone and Harvey Milk. Mascone was the mayor of San Francisco. Milk and White were supervisors.

White didn’t deny killing the two men, but he pleaded not guilty. His lawyers said he was unable to plan the murder because he was depressed. He had stopped eating healthy food and started eating sugary foods. The lawyers said these were symptoms of depression. Because of his depression, White murdered Mascone and Milk. A jury found White guilty of the lesser crime of manslaughter.

Reporters wrote about the effects of sugar on Dan White. They said too much junk food could cause a person to commit murder. One writer called it the Twinkie Defense. Twinkies are an American snack cake with a creamy, sugary filling.

The lawyers didn’t blame Twinkies, and they didn’t blame junk food. But looking for someone or something to blame isn’t unusual when we have sin in our lives.

**David’s Sin (2 Samuel 11:2-15)**

David was king of Israel. He wanted what he wanted when he wanted it. One day he saw Bathsheba — and he wanted her. Bathsheba was a beautiful woman. David had her brought to him. Later, she sent David a message: She was expecting a baby.

David didn’t think about the fact that Bathsheba was

**Things to  
Think About**

1. Why is it difficult to accept **personal responsibility** for sin?
2. Have you asked God to forgive your sins?

married. Her husband was Uriah, a soldier. He wasn't living in Jerusalem because he was fighting in a war for King David.

So David sent for General Joab and told him to send Uriah to the palace. David talked about the war with Uriah. Then he told Uriah to go home to his wife. But Uriah didn't go home. Uriah said it wasn't right for him to see his wife. His fellow soldiers were in tents, far from their families. David told Uriah to stay another day. But again, Uriah wouldn't go home.

Why did David want Uriah to go home? He wanted Uriah (and everyone else) to think Uriah was the father of Bathsheba's baby. But that didn't happen, so David came up with a plan.

David sent Uriah back to war with a note for Joab. The note told Joab to put Uriah on the front lines where the worst fighting happened. This was a death warrant for Uriah. David wanted Uriah to die. Sure enough, Uriah was killed in battle.

Now David was able to do whatever he wanted. No one would tell the king what he could or couldn't do. David didn't think about the **consequences** of his sin.

Sin affects the person who sins. But it also affects other people. David's desire led to adultery, which led to dishonesty. His dishonesty led to murder. David didn't have to answer to his people. He had to answer to God — and sin never pleases God.

**Nathan's Parable (2 Samuel 12:1-13a)**

Nathan was a man of God. He came after Samuel as leader of the people. Nathan was an honest servant of God. The people loved Nathan. When Nathan spoke, the people listened. When Nathan spoke for God, the people obeyed.

Nathan was an advisor to King David. He was loyal to the

king, and the two men were close friends. Nathan could say things to David that others would never dare. Nathan knew it was time to say some things that David needed to hear.

So he told a **parable** of a poor man whose lamb was taken away by a selfish, rich man. David represented the rich man. Uriah represented the poor man. Bathsheba represented the lamb.

Nathan asked David, “Bathsheba had your child. Then you had her husband killed. Why would you hate God so much that you did what you did?”

When Nathan spoke, David listened. It took courage for Nathan to say all that. But he knew David needed to accept personal responsibility for his sin.

### **When We Confess Our Sins**

When you are wrong, admit it. People will respect you for it. They will trust you to do the right thing. It takes courage to take responsibility for the consequences of your actions.

A child may point to his brother and say, “He did it.” He may blame his brother for his own actions. A child has to be taught to say, “I’m sorry” or “I was wrong

to do it.” It takes courage to admit a sin.

We are to confess our sins. We are to confess to those who are affected by our sins. We are to confess to God.

When a person hears a confession, that person has a choice. He can forgive the sinner — or choose not to forgive. But when a person confesses to God, he will be forgiven. God always forgives sinners who confess their sins.

You cannot hide your sins from God. Confession shows our faith in God.

It takes faith to have courage. It takes courage to have faith.

### **2 Samuel 11:2-15; 12:1-13a**

**11:2** When evening came David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king’s house. From the roof he saw a woman washing herself. The woman was very beautiful.

**3** So David sent someone to ask about the woman. And one said, “Is this not Eliam’s daughter Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?”

**4** David sent men and took her. When she came to him, he lay with her. After she had made herself clean again, she returned to her house.

**5** She was going to have a baby, so she sent someone to tell David, “I am going to have a baby.”

**6** Then David sent men to Joab, saying, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” So Joab sent Uriah to David.

**7** When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people were doing, and how the

war was going.

**8** Then David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house, and wash your feet.” And Uriah left the king’s house, and a gift from the king was sent to him.

**9** But Uriah slept at the door of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord. He did not go down to his house.

**10** When they told David that Uriah did not go down to his house, David said to Uriah, “Have you not returned from traveling a long way? Why did you not go down to your house?”

**11** Uriah said to David, “The special box of the Lord, and Israel and Judah, are staying in tents. My lord Joab and the servants of my lord are staying in the open field. Should I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? By your life and the life of your soul, I will not do this thing.”

**12** Then David said to Uriah, “Stay here today also. Tomorrow I will let you go.” So Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and the next.

**13** David called him, and he ate and drank with him, and David made him drunk. In the evening Uriah went out to lie on his bed with his lord’s servants. He did not go down to his house.

**14** In the morning, David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by Uriah.

**15** He had written in the letter, “Put Uriah in the front of the hardest battle and come away from him, so that he may be killed.”

**12:1** Then the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said, “There were two men in one city. One was rich and the other was poor.

**2** The rich man had many flocks and cattle.

**3** But the poor man had nothing except one little female lamb which he bought and fed. It grew up together with him and his children. It would eat his bread and drink from his cup and lie in his

arms. It was like a daughter to him.

**4** Now a traveler came to the rich man. But the rich man was not willing to take from his own flock or his own cattle, to make food for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the poor man’s female lamb and made it ready for the man who had come to him.”

**5** David was very angry at the man, and said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, for sure the man who has done this should die.

**6** And he must pay four times the worth of the lamb, because he did this thing without pity.”

**7** Nathan said to David, “You are the man! This is what the Lord God of Israel says: ‘I chose you to be the king of Israel. I saved you from the hand of Saul.

**8** I gave you Saul’s family and Saul’s wives into your care. I gave you the nations of Israel and Judah. And if this were too little, I would give you as much more.

**9** Why have you hated the Word of the Lord by doing what is bad in His eyes? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword. You have taken his wife to be your wife. You have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon.

**10** So now some from your family, even in the future, will die by the sword, because you have turned against Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.’

**11** This is what the Lord says: ‘See, I will bring trouble against you from your own family. I will take your wives in front of your eyes and give them to your neighbor. He will lie with your wives in the light of day.

**12** You did it in secret. But I will do this in front of all Israel, and under the sun.’”

**13** Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to him, “The Lord has taken away your sin. You will not die.”





Adult Bible Study in Simplified English

**Bible Text**

Amos 1:1-2; 2:6-16;  
7:10-17

**Memory Verse**

“Let what is good and what is right keep me safe, because I wait for you.”

(Psalm 25:21)

**Word List**

**circuit:** a route; usually a circular path  
**opposition:** disapproval shown by others

# Amos: Facing Opposition Courageously

It was the early 1800s, and the American population was moving west. Pioneers started small towns wherever they settled. But at first, those towns were too small to support a pastor. The solution? The **circuit** preacher.

These men were pastors of several churches. They would preach at one church the first Sunday of each month, then at another church on the second Sunday. Sometimes the preacher would have only two churches. These were half-time churches. Sometimes the preacher would have four churches. These were quarter-time churches. Circuit preaching gave young preachers a chance to get experience. More importantly, it provided people with a spiritual advisor they might not otherwise have had.

Many circuit riders dreamed of being the pastor of a church in the county seat—the largest town in the county. The dream was to have church in a big brick building. It would be even better if the church building had a steeple on top!

**Hello, Amos (Amos 1:1-2)**

Amos was a shepherd, a tree farmer, and a country preacher. He didn’t have a church. He didn’t have experience preaching. But he knew God called him to preach. Most of all, Amos loved God. He had a message to preach. He spoke words directly from God. Amos had the courage to speak the truth.

**Amos Preaches (Amos 2:6-16)**

Amos preached about the sins of Israel. He told the people

**Things to Think About**

1. How do you react when someone says, “God told me” what to say or what to do about something?
  
2. What specifically has God said He wants you to do?
  
3. Have you allowed God to speak to you today?

the consequences of sin. It took courage to preach about sin.

When Israel was at war, it was a bad place to live. The army was brutal. Soldiers were cruel. Lying, corruption, and sin were everywhere. But when Israel was at peace, the people were very focused on themselves. They were self-satisfied.

The leaders didn’t care about the needs of the people. They didn’t care for the poor. They cared only about themselves. Their attitude was “I will get others before they can get me.” They lived as if all was well. They acted as if life could only get better. They didn’t think the past would be repeated.

In the good times, the rich got richer. But the poor got poorer. The rich profited from the poor. They abused the poor. They oppressed the needy. The rich became more controlling.

The people of Israel worshipped the one true God—some of the time. But in good times, they became less dependent on God. They blended their worship of God with idol worship.

God is the one true God, and He was not pleased with their idol worship. He alone is to be worshipped.

**Amos and Amaziah Disagree (Amos 7:10-17)**

Amaziah was the priest at Bethel, a town in the Northern Kingdom. Bethel was the religious center of the Northern Kingdom. This made Amaziah an important priest, just like the preacher in a county seat church back in the 1800s.

Amaziah tried to silence Amos. Amos preached against worshipping idols. Amaziah tried to get Amos to leave town, but Amos would not be bullied. So Amaziah went to King Jeroboam and accused Amaziah of treason. He lied about Amos.

Jeroboam didn’t listen to Amaziah. Jeroboam was not

touched by Amos’ message. The words did not affect life in the palace. It didn’t concern him. Jeroboam would not be bothered.

Amos preached that God would punish Israel, and Israel would once again go into exile. Amaziah had much to lose if Amos’ words were true. Amos said Amaziah would be taken captive. His sons would be killed. His wife would become a prostitute. The family would lose their land. Amaziah would die in a foreign land.

This wasn’t what Amaziah wanted to hear. He wanted Amos to stop preaching. But Amos could not stop preaching. He was called by God.

It took great faith for Amos to preach the words of God. Also, it took courage to preach words of doom. Amos believed in the message that he carried to the people.

Amos could not change the message. He could not tell people all was well. He had to encourage the people to change. He had to tell them of the consequences of not changing their ways. This was the responsible thing to do.

Amos reached out to the people with

God’s Word. But it was up to the people to listen and hear the message. They had to believe Amos was speaking God’s words.

Amos ended his message with the possibility of hope (in chapter 9). It was a future hope. Amos preached a future of being restored to the land that God had given to the people.

When we face **opposition**, we are to encourage each other in the Lord. We are to keep our eyes on Jesus. Together, we gain strength for facing the challenges this life promises to bring us. Healthy relationships with others help us keep our faith in God.

It takes faith to have courage. It takes courage to have faith.

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**Amos 1:1-2; 2:6-16; 7:10-17**

**1** These are the words of Amos, a shepherd of Tekoa, which he received in special dreams about Israel two years before the earth shook. Uzziah was king of Judah then, and Jeroboam the son of Joash was the king of Israel.

**2** He said, “The Lord makes a loud noise from Zion. He lets His voice be heard from Jerusalem. And the shepherds’ fields are filled with sorrow, and the top of Carmel dries up.”

**2:6** The Lord says, “For three sins of Israel and for four, I will not hold back punishment. They sell those who are right and good for money.

To get shoes, they sell people who are in need.

**7** They crush those who are poor in the dust of

the earth with their feet. They push the poor out of the way. A man and his father go to the same girl and sin against My holy name.

**8** They lie down beside every altar on clothing taken as trust for promises. And in the house of their God they drink the wine which was paid by those who have done wrong.

**9** “I destroyed the Amorite before them, who was as tall as the cedar trees and as strong as the oaks. I destroyed his fruit above and his root below.

**10** I brought you up from the land of Egypt and led you in the desert for forty years to give you the land of the Amorite.

**11** Then I raised up some of your sons to speak for Me, and some of your young men to be Nazirites. Is this not true, you sons of Israel?” says the Lord.

**12** “But you made the Nazirites drink wine. And you told the men who speak for Me not to speak.

**13** Now I will crush you down like a wagon is crushed under a heavy load of grain.

**14** Even the fast man will not get away. The strong man will not keep his strength. And the powerful man will not save his life.

**15** He who uses the bow will not stand. The fast runner will not get away. The horseman will not save his life.

**16** Even the strongest of heart among the men of war will run away without clothes on that day,” says the Lord.

**7:7** This is what He showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall made straight by a string held in His hand.

**8** The Lord said to me, “What do you see, Amos?” And I said, “A string.” Then the Lord said, “See, I am about to put a straight string

among my people Israel. I will not change My mind again about punishing them.

**9** The high places of Isaac will be destroyed. The holy places of Israel will be laid waste. Then I will rise up against the people of Jeroboam with the sword.”

**10** Then Amaziah, the religious leader of Bethel, sent word to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, “Amos has made plans against you among the people of Israel. His words will destroy the land.

**11** For this is what Amos is saying: ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword, and the people of Israel will be taken away from their own land to a strange land.’”

**12** Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Go, you who tell what is going to happen in the future! Run away to the land of Judah! There eat your bread, and there speak your words!

**13** But never speak about your special dreams again at Bethel. For it is a holy place of the king, a place where the nation worships.”

**14** Amos answered Amaziah, saying, “I am not a man who tells what is going to happen in the future, or the son of such a man. I take care of sheep and cattle, and grow fig trees.

**15** But the Lord took me from following the flock and said to me, ‘Go and speak in My name to My people Israel.’

**16** So now hear the Word of the Lord. You are saying, ‘Do not speak against Israel or preach against the people of Isaac.’

**17** So this is what the Lord says: ‘Your wife will sell the use of her body in the city. Your sons and daughters will be killed by the sword. Your land will be divided and given to others. You yourself will die in an unclean land. And Israel will be driven away from this land to a strange country.’”



Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English

### **Bible Text**

1 Kings 22:6-28

### **Memory Verse**

“Those who are lost in sin will be fooled by the things he can do. They are lost in sin because they did not love the truth that would save them.”  
(2 Thessalonians 2:10)

### **Word List**

**extraordinary:** extra special  
**ordinary:** plain; usual

# Micaiah: Telling the Truth

One of the biggest lies in history was told in the 1930s. Hitler and his “yes men” blamed the Jews for everything that went wrong in Germany. The Jews controlled the banks and many businesses. He even blamed the Jews for Germany’s loss in World War I. Hitler told a century-old myth that the Jews kidnapped Christian children. The children’s blood was used in the unleavened bread at Passover. He blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus.

Hitler created “the big lie.” A big lie is an unlikely story. Hitler and his men made up this theory: Tell a lie loudly, and tell a lie over and over again. Let the lie be heard often. If said enough times, people will begin to believe it.

The belief in Hitler’s big lie resulted in his final solution. He said we must get rid of the people causing the problem. Kill the Jews, then the problems of Germany will go away. The lies Hitler told resulted in World War 2.

We know how that story ended.

### **Hello, Micaiah (1 Kings 22:6)**

Micaiah was an **ordinary** person. There was nothing to make him stand out in a crowd. But Micaiah was special because he was an ordinary person who showed **extraordinary** character.

### **The King Speaks (1 Kings 22:7-18)**

Ahab was king of Israel. He knew the culture of the people he ruled. He was married to Jezebel, a very evil woman.

**Things to  
Think About**

1. Why should preachers preach the truth rather than the message people want to hear?
2. Who is the most extraordinary person you know?
3. Why is that person special to you?

King Ahab had prophets living in his court. He called on these men when he had a decision to make. Ahab wanted to know the outcome of the battle he was about to fight.

There were 400 prophets who claimed to be prophets of God. But they were really in the service of King Ahab. He paid them to tell him the future. These men knew what Ahab wanted to hear. But they had no other vision or word from God. They simply told the King what he wanted to hear. These prophets were the king's "yes men." God didn't call these prophets. Ahab called them. Their loyalty was with the king.

One day, King Ahab of Israel met with King Jehoshaphat of Judah. Jehoshaphat wanted the Syrian army out of Judah. He wanted Ahab's army to fight the Syrians alongside his army.

Ahab called for his prophets. He told them he wanted to go to war against Syria. He asked, "Should I go?"

The 400 prophets met together. The prophets told King Ahab, "Go. Go to war. Win the victory." This was exactly what Ahab wanted to do, so he believed his prophets.

Ahab was impressed with the number of prophets he had. But Jehoshaphat was not. He wanted another opinion. King Jehoshaphat was looking for the truth.

**Micaiah Speaks (1 Kings 22:19-28)**

Micaiah was the one true prophet of God. He knew the truth. He had the right answer. God spoke to Micaiah, and Micaiah trusted God. Micaiah spoke the truth.

He told Ahab of his vision. He saw sheep scattered on a mountain. They had no shepherd to take them home. Sheep need a shepherd.

The meaning was clear. The missing shepherd was Ahab. The sheep were his soldiers. Ahab was missing because he would be killed in battle. The soldiers would be scattered without a leader.

The death of Ahab would put Israel in a state of confusion. Everything would be in chaos.

Ahab decided to go to war anyway. His 400 prophets said he would win. It was a decision based on lies. A lie does not become truth just because most people want it to be true.

A man who doesn't walk with God may be able to quote God's Word. But quoting God's Word doesn't mean the man walks with God. It doesn't mean God's Word isn't true. God's Word says exactly what it says. Nothing can change it.

Ahab was an evil king in the sight of the Lord. Micaiah was a good and honest prophet. Micaiah had courage. It took courage to speak against the other 400 prophets. It took faith to speak the truth. Micaiah stayed true to the words of God.

**Strong Person, Strong Character**

A strong person shows strong Christian character. A person of character

does the right thing. That person doesn't need the approval of others. That person is looking to God.

A person of character walks a straight path. That person doesn't need a building with his name on it. That person doesn't need a park with her name on it. That person looks to have his name written in God's Book of Life.

A person of character can change the world. That person may change the lives of others one person at a time. That person may change the lives of many people with a single action. God looks for His followers to be people of character.

It takes a person of great faith to have the courage to speak out for God.

It takes faith to have courage. It takes courage to have faith.

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**1 Kings 22:6-28**

**6** Then the king of Israel gathered together the men who spoke for God, 400 men. He said to them, "Should I go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or should I not?" And they said, "Go. For the Lord will give it to the king."

**7** But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not another man who speaks for the Lord here, that we may ask him?"

**8** The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat,

“There is only one other man whom we may ask of the Lord, but I hate him. He does not speak anything good about me, only bad. He is Micaiah the son of Imlah.” But Jehoshaphat said, “Let not the king say that.”

**9** Then the king of Israel called a soldier and said, “Be quick to bring Micaiah the son of Imlah.”

**10** Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones, dressed in their king’s clothing. They sat at the grain-floor at the gate of Samaria. All the men who speak for God were speaking in front of them.

**11** Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made horns of iron for himself and said, “The Lord says, ‘With these you will fight the Syrians until they are destroyed.’”

**12** And all the men who spoke for God said so. They said, “Go up to Ramoth-gilead and do well. For the Lord will give it to the king.”

**13** The man who went to call Micaiah said to him, “See, the words of those who speak for God are all in the king’s favor. Let your words be like theirs and speak in favor of the king.”

**14** But Micaiah said, “As the Lord lives, I will say what the Lord says to me.”

**15** Micaiah came to the king. And the king said to him, “Micaiah, should we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or should we not?” He answered, “Go up and do well. The Lord will give it to the king.”

**16** Then the king said to him, “How many times must I tell you to speak nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?”

**17** So Micaiah said, “I saw all Israel spread upon the mountains like sheep which have no shepherd. And the Lord said, ‘These have no owner. Let each of them return to his house in

peace.’”

**18** Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you that he would not speak good of me, but bad?”

**19** Micaiah said, “So hear the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on His throne. All those in heaven were standing by Him on His right and on His left.

**20** The Lord said, ‘Who will lead Ahab to go up and die at Ramoth-gilead?’ And one said one thing, and another said another thing.

**21** Then a spirit came and stood before the Lord and said, ‘I will lead him.’

**22** The Lord said to him, ‘How?’ And he said, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all those who will tell what will happen in the future.’ Then the Lord said, ‘You are to lead him, and do well. Go and do so.’

**23** Now see, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these who tell what will happen in the future. The Lord has said bad things against you.”

**24** Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came and hit Micaiah on the face and said, “How did the Spirit of the Lord go from me to speak to you?”

**25** Micaiah said, “See, you will see on that day when you go into a room to hide yourself.”

**26** Then the king of Israel said, “Take Micaiah and return him to Amon the leader of the city and to Joash the king’s son.

**27** Tell them, ‘The king says, “Put this man in prison and feed him with little bread and water, until I return in peace.”’”

**28** Micaiah said, “If you do return in peace, then the Lord has not spoken by me.” And he said, “Listen, all you people.”





Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English

### **Bible Text**

2 Chronicles 34:19-31

### **Memory Verse**

“Preach the Word of God. Preach it when it is easy and people want to listen and when it is hard and people do not want to listen. Preach it all the time. Use the Word of God to show people they are wrong. Use the Word of God to help them do right. You must be willing to wait for people to understand what you teach as you teach them.”

(2 Timothy 4:2)

### **Word List**

**confidence:** faith in one's ability

**proclaimed:** to make something clear to another person

# Huldah: Interpreting and Proclaiming God's Message

Aunt Elizabeth was a missionary. She served in Southeast Asia for many years. When she retired, Aunt Elizabeth chose to live in Thailand. She rented a house, and she invited several elderly women to live with her. These women had no relatives. They had no family to take care of them. Aunt Elizabeth took on the responsibility.

One day Aunt Elizabeth was standing in line at the post office. As she looked about the room, she saw that it was very dirty.

She thought to herself, “Someone should come and clean this area. Many people come in and out of here. It is too dirty. Children come in with their mothers and play on the floor. When they leave, they are very dirty. Office workers come in to get stamps. They touch the sticky counters. They go back to their offices. Think of the germs. Someone should clean up this place.”

Aunt Elizabeth continued talking to herself. The more she talked, the more she wanted action.

The next morning Aunt Elizabeth returned to the post office. She brought with her a mop and a bucket. She had a broom and a rag.

She quietly went to work. She wiped off sticky counters. She swept and mopped the floor. Aunt Elizabeth worked hard. At last, she was satisfied with the room's cleanliness.

Then she left without a word.

**Things to Think About**

1. Why is it difficult to speak up when people talk about God?
2. Is it important “to wait for people to understand as you teach them”—and why is it important?
3. What does your life say to others?

She cleaned the dirty post office. She realized this was her post office. If no one else took care of it, she would.

The people in her town saw what she was doing. They talked about the American woman who had become a part of their town. She was no longer an outsider.

By her actions, others saw God at work.

**Josiah, the Boy King (2 Chronicles 34:19-21)**

King Anon was an evil king. He was killed. His successor was Josiah, the son of Anon. Josiah was eight years old when he became king. Josiah was as good as his father was evil.

Josiah began actively ruling when he turned 18. Josiah wanted to make a difference. Josiah worshipped the God of David. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord.

The priest Hilleah suggested that the Temple needed repairs. Remodeling the Temple would make a difference in the lives of the people.

Josiah ordered the work on the Temple to begin. A section of the Law of God was found in the rubble of the Temple. This was probably from the Book of Deuteronomy.

Josiah had someone to read the Law to him. The Word of God touched the heart of Josiah. He saw that the people had turned away from God. He wanted to lead them back to God.

He needed someone who could tell him what the words meant. Josiah needed an interpreter.

**Hello, Huldah (2 Chronicles 34:22-31)**

Huldah was a prophetess. Her husband was Shallum. Shallum was the keeper of King Josiah's wardrobe.

Huldah had many good qualities. People respected her. She showed that she was wise. Huldah walked with God. She was filled with His Word. Huldah was available to be used by God.

Josiah needed someone to tell him about the book. The King's men went to Huldah because they knew she would help. They trusted her. They knew she was honest. Huldah would have the answers they needed.

Huldah was well-known in Jerusalem. She had an inner peace. She was confident when she spoke. She was faithful to God.

Huldah went to King Josiah. She was prepared to talk to the king about God. She had courage to speak the truth. God's message was clear. Huldah **proclaimed** God's Word.

God used Huldah to speak to Josiah. God told the king that He was not pleased with Israel. The people had sinned. They had turned from God to worship idols. Their sins would be punished.

God made a promise to Josiah. God delayed His punishment. He would not punish Israel until after Josiah died.

God punishes those who sin against Him. God honors those who honor Him. Josiah honored God. He would not be punished.

Josiah urged the people to return to God. They stopped worshipping idols. They obeyed the Laws of God. They turned from their evil ways.

The Book of Law was found. The people found their way back to the God of their childhood.

God was pleased with Josiah and kept His promise. Israel was not punished until after Josiah died.

Huldah spoke the words of God. She spoke the truth. She was faithful to God. She shared her strong belief in the words she received from God.

Huldah spoke with **confidence**. It takes confidence to speak for God. It takes courage.

It is not always easy to talk about God. People might ridicule us. People might have had bad experiences with someone who said they spoke for God. People might have a heart not opened to God's Word.

We are to proclaim the Word of God

to all who will listen. We are called to speak. We are called to preach. We are called to teach. God will do the rest.

It takes faith to have courage. It takes courage to have faith.

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### 2 Chronicles 34:19-31

**19** When King Josiah heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes.

**20** Then the king called Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the writer, and Asaiah the king's servant. He told them,

**21** "Go, ask the Lord for me, and for those who are left in Israel and Judah, about the words of the book which have been found. For much of the Lord's anger has been poured out on us because our fathers have not obeyed the Word of the Lord. They have not done all that is written in this book."

**22** So Hilkiah and those whom the king had sent went to Huldah the woman who spoke for God. She was the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, who watched over the clothing. (She lived in Jerusalem in the second part of the city.) They spoke to her about this.

**23** And she said to them, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says, 'Tell the man who sent you to Me

**24** what I say. See, I am bringing much trouble to this place and to its people. I am allowing all the curses to come which are written in the

book they have read in front of the king of Judah.

**25** They have left Me and have burned special perfume to other gods, that they might make Me angry with all the work of their hands. So My anger will be poured out on this place, and it will not be stopped.

**26** But tell the king of Judah who sent you to the Lord, "This is what the Lord God of Israel says about the words which you have heard:

**27** 'Your heart was broken and you had no pride before God when you heard His words against this place and its people. And because you came before Me with no pride, tore your clothes, and cried before Me, I have heard you,' says the Lord.

**28** 'Your eyes will not see all the much trouble that I will bring on this place and its people. It will come after you die. You will be taken to your grave in peace.'"" The men brought back this word to the king.

**29** Then the king sent and gathered together all the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem.

**30** The king went up to the house of the Lord, with all the men of Judah, the people of Jerusalem, the religious leaders, the Levites, and all the people from the greatest to the least. And he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the agreement which was found in the Lord's house.

**31** Then the king stood in his place and made an agreement before the Lord. He agreed to follow the Lord, to obey His Laws with all his heart and soul, and to do what is written in the agreement in this book.



Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English

### **Bible Text**

Jeremiah 20:7-18;  
26:1-15

### **Memory Verse**

“Trust in the Lord  
with all your heart,  
and do not trust in  
your own  
understanding.”

(Proverbs 3:5)

### **Word List**

**perish:** to die  
**repent:** to be sorry  
for

# Jeremiah: Being Faithful in the Depths of Despair

Horatio G. Spafford (1828-1888) was a Chicago attorney. He had a wonderful wife and five children. Life was good.

Then tragedy struck. In 1870, his four-year-old son died of scarlet fever. In 1871, he lost all his land and houses on Lake Michigan in the Great Chicago Fire. The family needed a break. Horatio planned a trip to England for his family. But he had to delay his journey due to business. He sent his wife, Anna, and their daughters on ahead. He would follow just a few days later.

Their ship left New York Harbor to cross the Atlantic Ocean. But on the night of November 2, 1873, the *Ville du Havre* crashed into the *Loch Earn*. It took only 12 minutes for the *Ville du Havre* to sink. All four Spafford children drowned. Anna was found unconscious, floating on a wooden plank. After she reached Wales, she sent a telegram to Horatio: “Saved Alone.”

Horatio took the next ship to England. On the voyage, the captain pointed out where the *Ville du Havre* went down. The water was three miles deep. The pain was unbearable.

In his cabin that night, Horatio Spafford wrote the words:

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like seas billow roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
It is well, It is well with my soul.*

Anna later quoted a friend, “It is easy to be grateful and good when you have so much, but take care that you are not a fair-weather friend to God.”

**Things to  
Think About**

1. Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?
2. How do you handle disappointment?
3. Does God punish nations today?

**Jeremiah Weeps for Himself (Jeremiah 20:7-18)**

Jeremiah was a prophet. He was well-known throughout Judah. But he was not always a happy prophet. He often forgot the joy of serving God. Jeremiah was depressed and in despair.

It has been said, “To live in despair is to turn your back on God.” For Jeremiah, it was as if he were in a dark hole. He felt separated from God. However, nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:39).

Jeremiah was not afraid. But he complained to God. He questioned God. He had long, angry talks with God. Jeremiah came to conclusions about his life. He looked at his ministry, trying to understand how he reacted with others.

Jeremiah was mistaken about his job. Being a prophet had a down side. He didn’t like it when people became angry with what he preached. Jeremiah thought being a prophet was a special calling. He wanted to speak for God, but he wanted God to protect him from the hard times. Jeremiah wanted to be safe.

Jeremiah was a prophet. But he was also human.

**Jeremiah Weeps for Judah (Jeremiah 26:1-15)**

Jeremiah preached God’s Word. He had a message of doom and gloom. He promised disaster because the people had sinned. He said God would punish Judah and Jerusalem. The people needed to **repent** from their sins. Jeremiah preached and tried to get the people to return to their faith. He said God demanded that they repent.

Judah had been in this place before. They had heard the message so many times before: “Repent or **perish.**” Once again, the people rejected God. They enjoyed sinning. They didn’t

want to change. They didn't want to listen to what Jeremiah was saying. They didn't like what he was preaching. The people even threatened to kill Jeremiah.

When people don't like the message, they often say, "Let's kill the messenger." Jeremiah was the messenger.

It's easy to hear a happy message. People like to hear how God loves them. They like to be reminded that God will bless them. People like to hear how God will help them get rich.

But people don't like to be shown their failures. No one likes to hear about their character flaws.

Christians must be ready for opposition. Not everyone wants to hear the Good News of Jesus. When you preach the Word of God, you might be rejected. Others might make fun of your efforts or bully you. They might even try to hurt you.

But the message remains the same. Jesus told us what to do. We are to preach, to teach, and to baptize those who follow Him. The message of Jesus is clear. Yes, it takes courage to preach the Word.

Sometimes we get discouraged. We must look to God for the strength we need.

He is with us right now, and He promised to be with us forever. He will not leave us alone. We continue to move forward.

The God Who saves is so much greater than the troubles we face. God never gives us more than we can handle if we look to Him for strength (1 Cor. 10:13).

It takes faith to have courage. It takes courage to have faith.

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**Jeremiah 20:7-18, 26:1-15**

**7** O Lord, You have lied to me and I was fooled. You are stronger than I, and have had power over me. I have been laughed at all day. Everyone makes fun of me.

**8** For whenever I speak, I cry out. I tell of fighters and destroyers. For the Word of the Lord has become a shame and a cause of laughing at me all day long.

**9** But if I say, "I will not remember Him or speak any more in His name," then in my heart it is like a burning fire shut up in my bones. I am tired of holding it in, and I cannot do that.

**10** For I have heard many speaking in secret, saying, "Fear and trouble is on every side! Speak against him! Yes, let us speak against him!" All my trusted friends, watching for my fall, say, "It may be that he will be fooled. Then we can get power over him and punish him."

**11** But the Lord is with me like a powerful one who causes fear. So those who make it hard for me will fall and not have power over me. They will be put to much shame, because their plans have not gone well. Their shame will last forever and will not be forgotten.

**12** O Lord of All, You test those who are right and good. You see the mind and the heart. Let me see You punish them, for I have given my cause to You.

**13** Sing to the Lord! Praise the Lord! For He has taken the soul of the one in need from the hand of the sinful.

**14** Cursed is the day when I was born! Let the day not be honored when my mother gave birth to me!

**15** Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, saying, “A baby boy has been born to you!” and made him very happy.

**16** Let that man be like the cities which the Lord destroyed without pity. Let him hear a cry in the morning and a call of danger at noon.

**17** For he did not kill me before I was born, so that my mother’s body would have been my grave. **18** Why was I ever born to see trouble and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?

**26:1** In the beginning of the rule of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the Lord, saying,

**2** “This is what the Lord says: ‘Stand in the open space of the Lord’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah who have come to worship in the Lord’s house. Tell them all the words that I have told you to say to them. Do not leave out one word!

**3** It may be they will listen and everyone will turn from his sinful way. Then I may change My mind about the trouble I plan to put on them because of the sinful things they have done.’

**4** And tell them, “This is what the Lord says: “If you will not listen to Me and follow My Law which I have set before you,

**5** and if you do not listen to the words of My servants who speak for Me, whom I have been sending to you again and again, but you have not

listened,

**6** then I will make this House of God like Shiloh. And I will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.” ’ ‘

**7** The religious leaders and the men of God and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord.

**8** And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the Lord had told him to speak to all the people, the religious leaders and men of God and all the people took hold of him, saying, “You must die!

**9** Why have you spoken in the name of the Lord saying, ‘This house will be like Shiloh, and this city will be laid waste with no one living in it’?” And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the Lord.

**10** When the leaders of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king’s house to the house of the Lord and sat beside the New Gate of the Lord’s house.

**11** Then the religious leaders and men of God said to the leaders and to all the people, “This man must die! For he has spoken against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.”

**12** Then Jeremiah said to all the leaders and to all the people, “The Lord sent me to speak against this house and against this city all the words that you have heard.

**13** So now change your ways and your works, and obey the voice of the Lord your God. Then the Lord will change His mind about the trouble He has said would come to you.

**14** But as for me, see, I am in your hands. Do with me what is good and right in your eyes.

**15** Only know for sure that if you put me to death, you will bring the sin of killing a man who is not guilty on yourselves, on this city, and on its people. For it is true that the Lord has sent me to you to speak all these words for you to hear.”





Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English

**Bible Text**  
Daniel 3

**Memory Verse**

“The One Who called you is faithful and will do what He has promised.”  
(1 Thessalonians 5:24)

**Word List**

**devotion:** total commitment; loyalty  
**fiery furnace:** a very hot, open-topped oven used to heat large areas, such as a house or public building  
**unlimited:** without limits; with no boundaries; to no end

## Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: Giving Unlimited Devotion to God

Religious freedom is important in America. But many Christians don't have this freedom. In some countries, a church must register with the government. Then the government decides when they can worship and who will be their leader.

But some churches would rather not be controlled by the government. They don't register at all. They meet secretly for worship and Bible study. Their meetings are considered illegal.

Sometimes, they are arrested. One Christian was arrested and put in jail. His thumb and toe were tied together, and he was hung on a wall. Another man became sick, but the idols he prayed to could not heal him. When a Christian friend prayed for him, he was healed. He decided to become a Christian. Since then, he has been arrested for preaching God's Word.

Why do they preach? Why do they risk arrest? Because they believe that Jesus suffered for them. They are willing to pay the price to share God's truth and to show that they love God.

### **Three Guys from Judah (Daniel 3:1-15)**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were Hebrew friends from Judah. They were smart young men with bright futures. Then the Babylonian army came and destroyed the Temple. The army took most of the people to Babylon as prisoners or exiles.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were chosen to serve King Nebuchadnezzar. He was a powerful king whose army conquered many countries. The Babylonian Empire became one of the most powerful, important empires in world history.

**Things to  
Think About**

1. Would you walk through a fiery furnace to obey His Word?
2. What are the limits in your devotion to God?
3. When have you had to take a risk to obey the Word of God?

The three young men from Judah remembered their Jewish heritage. They continued to serve the one true God faithfully. They refused to pray to the many gods of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar decided to build a great idol. The statue was made of gold. It was 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide. The people were told to come see the statue. When the music began, the people were to bow down and pray to the idol.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose not to worship this idol. They chose to be faithful to God. Some of the king's men told the king, "The Jews did not bow to the idol."

Nebuchadnezzar was known for his bad temper. He displayed his rage. He did not like being disobeyed. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were brought before the king.

**Confession of Faith (Daniel 3:16-18)**

The three men spoke with confidence. They said they could not worship any god except the one true God. They said they were not afraid of the **fiery furnace**.

**The Ultimate Test (Daniel 3:19-23)**

Nebuchadnezzar was not pleased. He ordered his men to make the furnace seven times hotter than usual. The Israelites were thrown into the furnace. The fire was so hot that the men who got close enough to throw them in were killed. Then the king looked into the furnace.

But when he looked into the furnace, he saw not three, but four men. There was Shadrach—and Meshach—and Abednego. And there was another man who looked like "the Son of God."

God proved His faithfulness. The men had been saved!

**God Is Able to Deliver (Daniel 3:24-30)**

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the furnace. Their clothes and hair were not burned at all. Their bodies didn't smell like fire either.

The king was impressed. He liked a good fight, but he knew he lost this one. The king decreed that the Israelites were to worship their God. He said that no one should speak against God. The king would punish anyone who did.

God kept His promise. God showed His power. Three young men proved what happens to people who are faithful to Him.

The three men showed courage when they refused to worship the idol. They showed courage when they had to face the fiery furnace.

God is able to deliver those who are faithful to Him. He is willing to save those who love Him. God's power and purpose is in delivering His people.

It took courage to disobey King Nebuchadnezzar. It took faith to follow God, the King of kings, through the fire.

It takes faith to have courage. It takes courage to have faith.

**Daniel 3**

**1** King Nebuchadnezzar made an object of gold which looked like a god. It was fifteen times taller than a man, and as wide as three long steps. He set it up on the plain of Dura in the land of Babylon.

**2** Then Nebuchadnezzar called together all the captains, leaders, rulers, wise men, money-keepers, judges, and law-keepers of Babylon's lands. He called them to come to the first showing of the object that he had set up.

**3** So all the captains, leaders, rulers, wise men, money-keepers, judges, and law-keepers of Babylon's lands were gathered together for the special time of setting apart this object Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood in front of it.

**4** Then the man who spread news for the king said in a loud voice, "This is what you must do, O people of every nation and language:

**5** When you hear the sound of the horns and harps, and all kinds of music, you are to get down on your knees and worship the object of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.

**6** Whoever does not get down and worship will be thrown at once into the big and hot fire."

**7** Then all the people heard the sound of the horns and harps and all kinds of music. All the people of every nation and language got down and worshiped the object of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

**8** At this time certain ones who learned from stars came up and spoke against the Jews.

**9** They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever!

**10** You yourself, O king, have made a law that every man who hears the sound of the horns and harps and all kinds of music is to get down on his knees and worship the object of gold.

**11** And whoever does not get down and worship

must be thrown into the big and hot fire.

**12** There are certain Jews whom you have chosen as leaders over the land of Babylon. Their names are Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. These men have not listened to you, O king. They do not serve your gods or worship the object of gold which you have set up.”

**13** Then Nebuchadnezzar became very angry and called for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. And they were brought to the king.

**14** Nebuchadnezzar said to them, “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the object of gold that I have set up?

**15** Now if you are ready to get down on your knees and worship the object I have made when you hear the sound of the horns and harps and all kinds of music, very well. But if you will not worship, you will be thrown at once into the fire. And what god is able to save you from my hands?”

**16** Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer to this question.

**17** If we are thrown into the fire, our God Whom we serve is able to save us from it. And He will save us from your hand, O king.

**18** But even if He does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the object of gold that you have set up.”

**19** Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with anger, and he looked at Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego with an angry face. He had the fire made seven times hotter than it was.

**20** And he told certain powerful soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, and to throw them into the fire.

**21** So the men were tied up in their coats and head-coverings and their other clothes, and were thrown into the fire.

**22** Because the king had spoken that the fire was to be very hot, those men who put Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego into the fire were killed by the fire.

**23** The three men were still tied up when they fell into the fire.

**24** Then King Nebuchadnezzar was very surprised and stood up in a hurry. He said to his leaders, “Did we not throw three men who were tied up into the fire?” They answered, “That is true, O king.”

**25** He said, “Look! I see four men loose and walking about in the fire without being hurt! And the fourth one looks like a son of the gods (or the Son of God)!”

**26** Then Nebuchadnezzar came near the door where the fire was burning, and said, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” So Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the fire.

**27** The captains, leaders, rulers, and the king’s important men gathered around and saw that the fire had not hurt the bodies of these three men. Their hair was not burned. Their clothes were not burned. They did not even smell like fire.

**28** Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. He has sent His angel and saved His servants who put their trust in Him. They changed the king’s word and were ready to give up their lives instead of serving or worshiping any god except their own God.

**29** So I now make a law that if any people of any nation or language say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, they will be torn apart and their houses will be laid waste. For there is no other god who is able to save in this way.”

**30** Then the king made Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego very important in the land of Babylon.



Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English

### Bible Text

Esther 4:1-16

### Memory Verse

“Nothing should be done because of pride or thinking about yourself. Think of other people as more important than yourself. Do not always be thinking about your own plans only. Be happy to know what other people are doing.”

(Philippians 2:3-4)

### Word List

**harem:** a group of women who belong only to the king  
**mourning:** to be sad because of tragedy; to show signs of grief, such as weeping or wearing black clothes  
**ultimate risk:** to encounter the greatest danger or greatest chance of loss

# Esther: Taking the Ultimate Risk

John Bunyan (1628-1688) was an English writer and preacher. But he had a problem: He was not member of the Church of England. He lived during a time when leaders didn't allow a person to choose their church membership.

John Bunyan went to jail because he preached the Gospel. The choice was his: He could get out of jail. All he had to do was agree to stop preaching.

Bunyan said God told him to preach. He could not stop preaching. “If you release me today, I will preach tomorrow.”

John Bunyan spent his life in and out of jail. The laws kept changing. When preaching was allowed, John Bunyan was out of jail. When it was illegal to preach, Bunyan was in jail. But he refused to stop preaching. He had to do what God called him to do. He was willing to take the **ultimate risk**.

During one of his times in jail, John Bunyan had an idea for a story. The writing is described as a dream. He wrote the story about a man as he travels through life. The main character is named **Christian**. He travels on the Road to Salvation from the City of Despair to the Celestial City. Along the way, Christian meets Mr. Worldly Wise. He meets Faithful, Hope, and Evangelist. He also meets Ignorance and Little Faith.

This writing of John Bunyan became the book we know as *Pilgrim's Progress*. It became the best-known writing in the Christian world. It surpassed all other Christian writings. For over two centuries, it was second only to the Bible.

**Things to Think About**

1. When is breaking a law the right thing to do?
2. How much of a risk will you take when called of God to do so?
3. What risks have you taken for God?

**Quotable**

*The will of God will never take you where the love of God cannot keep you.*

John Bunyan had the courage to preach. He had the faith to follow God’s Will even though it led him to jail. In jail, he had the courage to write. His writings encouraged the world.

**When Your Cousin is Queen (Esther 4:1-9)**

Mordecai was the guardian of his cousin, Esther. She was an orphan girl, a country girl. She was also very beautiful.

Esther was chosen to be a member of the royal **harem**. A beauty pageant was held. The winner would be crowned queen.

Esther won! She married King Ahasuerus (also known as Xerxes). It was a Cinderella story set in biblical times.

In some ways, Ahasuerus was not a very good king. He didn’t always make good choices or proclaim good laws. One law said he would only see people that he invited into his presence. Not even Queen Esther could walk in and talk to her husband. This law allowed him to avoid seeing people. But it also meant the king didn’t know how his people lived. He didn’t see the daily misery of the people in his large empire.

Another law said no one could enter the palace if they wore clothes made of hair. Only people who could afford clothes of silk or cotton were allowed into the court.

Worst of all, Ahasuerus believed bad advice. One of his advisors talked him into killing all the Jews in his empire. What he didn’t know was that his new queen was a Jew. He had just signed her death warrant.

**Mordecai Goes to See Queen (Esther 3:10-15)**

Mordecai went to the palace. He was wearing clothes made from hair. But he had to see his cousin, Queen Esther.

Esther sent Mordecai a proper robe to wear. But he refused to change clothes. He said the Jews were in **mourning** because the king's men were going to kill them all. They were afraid and knew they would die soon.

Mordecai told Esther she had to convince the king to take back his order, to undo this terrible law.

Now Esther was the one who was afraid. It was not a simple thing to go see the king. Plus, she could not tell him why he should not kill all the Jews. He would want to know why she cared so much about the Jews. It would mean telling the king that she was a Jew. If the king was unhappy about that, he would have her killed. But Esther knew if she didn't speak up, Mordecai would die. All her relatives would die. All her friends would die.

Mordecai reminded Esther she was queen because God put her in that role. She was the only one who could save the Jews. Esther was in the right place at the right time. Mordecai said perhaps God put her in that position for this very reason.

Esther had faith in God. She understood she had to do what she had to

do. Her heart told her she had no choice. It was her turn to take the ultimate risk.

### **If I Die, I Die (Esther 4:15-16)**

Esther went to the king—and invited him to dinner. Twice! The second time, she told him she was a Jew. She told him that if all Jews were killed, she also would die.

King Ahasuerus listened to his beautiful queen. He realized he had been tricked into making that terrible law. He made a new law that helped to protect the Jews by allowing them to fight the soldiers and defend themselves.

This was a great victory for Esther and the Jewish people. Esther's courage saved her people.

Even now, the Jews celebrate Purim each spring. This celebration is in remembrance of their deliverance. The book of Esther is read in synagogues. Food is given to friends. Donations are made to charities. Everyone dresses in costumes, and a festive supper is served. Purim is a day of feasting and rejoicing.

Yes, Esther took a big risk by going to the king when she was not invited. Telling the king she was a Jew was another big risk. But Esther trusted God. It takes

faith to follow the will of God. It takes courage to do what He asks you to do.

It takes faith to have courage. It takes courage to have faith.

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**Esther 4:1-16**

**1** When Mordecai learned all that had been done, he tore his clothes. He dressed in cloth made from hair and put on ashes, and went out into the city and cried with loud cries.

**2** He went as far as the king’s gate, for no one was to go through the king’s gate wearing cloth made from hair.

**3** There was much sorrow among the Jews in each and every part of the nation where the king’s law was made known. They went without food and cried with sounds of sorrow. Many lay in cloth made from hair and in ashes.

**4** Then Esther’s women and men servants came and told her, and the queen was very troubled. She sent clothes for Mordecai to wear, that he might take off his clothes made from hair. But he would not take them.

**5** Then Esther called Hathach from the king’s servants whom the king had chosen to help her. She told him to go to Mordecai and find out what was wrong and why.

**6** So Hathach went out to Mordecai at the king’s gate in the open space of the city.

**7** And Mordecai told him all that had happened to him. He told him just how much money Haman had promised to pay to the king’s storehouses to have the Jews destroyed.

**8** He also gave him one of the letters of the law

that was sent out from Susa to destroy the Jews, that he might show it to Esther and let her know. And he said that she should go in to the king and beg him to show favor to her people.

**9** Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said.

**10** Then Esther told Hathach to say to Mordecai,

**11** “All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s nation know that he has one law for any man or woman who comes to him in his room who has not been called: They will be put to death, unless the king holds out his special golden stick to him so that he may live. And I have not been called to come to the king for these thirty days.”

**12** Then Mordecai was told what Esther had said.

**13** Mordecai answered, “Do not think that you in the king’s special house will live any more than all the other Jews.

**14** For if you keep quiet at this time, help will come to the Jews from another place. But you and your father’s house will be destroyed. Who knows if you have not become queen for such a time as this?”

**15** Then Esther told them to say to Mordecai,

**16** “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and have them all go without food so they can pray better for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my women servants will go without food in the same way. Then I will go in to the king, which is against the law. And if I die, I die.”





Adult Bible Study in  
Simplified English

### **Bible Text**

Nehemiah 2:1-5;  
5:1-15

### **Memory Verse**

“Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you? He wants you to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him. He wants you to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deuteronomy 10:12)

### **Word List**

**advocate:** someone who speaks up for another person, group or cause

**drought:** a long period of time when there is no rain, causing crops to fail; drought usually leads to famine

# Nehemiah: Standing Up for People

*Undercover Boss* is a reality show on television. The president of a company goes in disguise to work in his own company. The workers don't know how important he is.

He sees how his company really functions. The workers talk about their jobs. The president discovers the good things about his workers. He listens as the workers talk about their lives.

One time, a worker told of the impact a 10 percent pay cut had on his family. Later, the president admitted he had not thought 10 percent was that much. He didn't realize that many people in the US live from paycheck to paycheck.

These are called the working poor. They are not choosing to live beyond their means. They are just barely able to pay for the basic things in life.

The working poor have incomes that fall below the official poverty level. They usually get no benefits such as health care.

They are often overlooked. They often don't qualify for government services. They don't get food baskets at Thanksgiving. But often, they are the first to help others.

This is a group of people who needs help. They need to be encouraged. They need to know someone cares. They need to know they are loved.

### **I Want to Go Home (Nehemiah 2:1-5)**

Nehemiah was a cupbearer to Artaxerxes, the King of Babylon. He was an Israelite who had been taken into captivity. But while in captivity, he thrived. He was chosen to serve wine to

**Things to  
Think About**

1. What does God want us to do when we see people in need?
2. How does God challenge you to meet the needs of others?

the king. The two men became friends.

Nehemiah had a very good job, an important job. He was happy with his life in Babylon for many reasons.

Yet Nehemiah's brother, Hanani, talked about the terrible conditions in Jerusalem. When the Babylonian army invaded Jerusalem years before, they completely wrecked the city. The Temple was in ruins. Homes were destroyed. The city was no more than a pile of broken buildings.

Years later, Jerusalem was still a disaster zone. The people were living on top of the rubble. Little had been done to repair the city. The people didn't have the strength to rebuild their houses. They didn't care about the Temple. The people of Jerusalem were living in despair.

Nehemiah mourned for the loss of the city. He wanted a better life for the Jews. He told the king about his hometown. The king agreed to allow his cupbearer to go home. Plus, the king gave Nehemiah materials to help repair the Temple.

**Rich Men, Poor Men (Nehemiah 5:1-5)**

The people were rebuilding the wall that surrounded Jerusalem. Soldiers surrounded them as they worked. The soldiers were protecting the workers. They should have felt safe.

However, they were hungry. They didn't have time to plant fields. They had been busy building the wall. They probably would not have had crops anyway. There was a **drought** in the land.

The people didn't have money to pay their taxes. They were too busy building the wall to stop and earn money. Some people borrowed money from rich men. They were to repay the

loan at a high interest rate—sometimes as much as 40-50 percent. Some people sold their children into slavery to pay their debts. It was an economic crisis.

The people were not trying to get the rich men into trouble. They simply needed debt relief. They complained to Nehemiah.

Nehemiah cared about people. He believed people were more important than the profits made from the people.

Nehemiah knew that the people needed an **advocate**. He was in the role of leader. Now it was time for him to lead.

He saw that the rich were getting richer. The poor were as poor as they could be. Nehemiah was angry. It was not fair, and it was not right.

### **Up with People (Nehemiah 5:6-13)**

Nehemiah talked to the rich. He told them what they were doing was wrong. He called on them to restore to the poor what they had taken away. He said they should do it in the name of God. They should act because they feared God.

The rich men knew Nehemiah was right. They knew God was not pleased with their actions. They promised to make

things right with the people.

They stood. They said, “Amen.” They praised God and kept the promises they made.

You can imagine that the poor were very happy when they learned what Nehemiah had done. After so many years, they finally had someone who cared about their problems.

### **The Leader Who Follows (Nehemiah 5:14-15)**

As the leader of the people, Nehemiah was entitled to eat fine food. But he didn't do this because he knew others were suffering. Nehemiah chose to live just like the people lived.

Nehemiah had the courage to take the role of leader. He left a good job in Babylon and returned to the land of his people.

Nehemiah had faith in God. He followed God; the people followed him.

It takes courage to have faith. It takes faith to have courage.

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### **Nehemiah 2:1-5; 5:1-15**

**2:1** In the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, wine was in front of him. And I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I

had not been sad in front of him before.

**2** So the king said to me, “Why is your face so sad when you are not sick? It must be that you are sad in your heart.” Then I was very much afraid.

**3** I said to the king, “Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers’ graves, lies waste and its gates destroyed by fire?”

**4** Then the king said to me, “What are you asking for?” So I prayed to the God of heaven.

**5** And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your eyes, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ graves. Let me build it again.”

**5:1** Now the people and their wives began to cry in a loud voice against their Jewish brothers.

**2** For some said, “We, our sons and our daughters are many. Let us get grain, that we may eat and live.”

**3** And some said, “We are giving up our fields, our grape-vines and our houses, that we might get grain because of no food.”

**4** Others said, “We have taken money from others to pay the king’s tax on our fields and our grape-vines, and we must pay back this money.

**5** Our flesh is like the flesh of our brothers. Our children are like their children. Yet we are made to sell our sons and daughters to work for others. Some of our daughters have already been sold and taken away. We cannot do anything, because our fields and vines belong to others.”

**6** I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.

**7** I thought about it, and spoke sharp words to the rulers and leaders. I said to them, “You are making the people pay back more money than you give them to use!” So I gathered many

people together against them.

**8** And I said to them, “As we have been able, we have bought and freed our Jewish brothers who were sold to the nations. But you would even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us!” They were quiet and could not find a word to say.

**9** So I said, “What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God to stop the nations who hate us from putting us to shame?”

**10** I, my brothers and my servants are giving them money and grain. Let us stop making them pay back more than they are given.

**11** Return to them this very day their fields, vines, olive trees, and houses. Also return to them one-hundredth part of the money, grain, new wine, and oil, that you have been making them pay.”

**12** Then they said, “We will give these back and will ask nothing from them. We will do just as you say.” So I called the religious leaders, and had them promise that they would keep their word.

**13** I shook out the front of my clothing and said, “So may God shake out every man from his house and from all he has worked for, who does not keep this promise. So may he be shaken out and made empty.” And all the people said, “Let it be so!” and praised the Lord. Then they did as they had promised.

**14** Also, in the twelve years after I was chosen to be their ruler in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, I and my brothers did not eat the food allowed to the ruler.

**15** The rulers who were before me made the people work very hard. They took bread and wine from them, besides forty pieces of silver. Even their servants ruled over the people. But I did not do so because of the fear of God.