

Unit 2: Covenant Keeping God



HE IS THE

Faithful God

WHO KEEPS HIS

COVENANT

FOR A THOUSAND

GENERATIONS

DEUTERONOMY 7:9

Participant Guide

© FBC Watauga and FBC Liberty City 2024

Table of contents

About the unit			p. 2
Maps and Charts			p. 3
How Reliable is the Old Testament?			p. 5
March 3	God who is Faithful (D. Hester)	Numbers 14:11-38	p. 6
March 10	God who is Sovereign (N. McEndree)	Numbers 22-24	p. 11
March 17	God who is Jealous (J. Hurst)	Deuteronomy 4:15-40	p. 16
March 24	God who Exposes Sin (M. Hurst)	Joshua 7	p. 22
March 31	God who Rescues (S. Roberts)	Judges 4	p. 29
April 7	God who Chooses (V. Hurst)	Judges 6-8	p. 37
April 14	God who Calls us by Name (S. Roberts)	1 Samuel 3	p. 42
April 21	God who is Worthy of Worship (Kathy B.)	Psalm 34	p. 49
April 28	God who Establishes Kingdoms (N. McEndree)	Psalm 21	p. 54
End Notes			p. 57

“God-shot” referenced throughout this unit is a phrase from The Bible Re-cap. Basically, “it is a snapshot of God’s character or attributes”¹ from the passage.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture is taken from the Christian Standard Bible.

About this unit

The word “covenant” appears 298 times in the Bible, apart from its synonyms. In fact, “testament” is one of those synonyms, thus one way to understand the Old Testament and the New Testament is to remember they are about the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.¹

What is a covenant? The word covenant is from the Hebrew word “beriyth” and literally means “a compact made by passing between two pieces of flesh.”² This is why we have that unusual ceremony between God and Abram in Genesis 15, and circumcision as a sign of the covenant in Genesis 17. Basically, a covenant is defined as a treaty, alliance, or agreement.³ In Scripture we see covenants made by people, nations, and God. Sometimes the covenants between humans and nations were good and kept, sometimes they were not. But God’s covenants are different because our God is a good God who keeps His covenants.

There are 5 main covenants in the Bible made between God and man: The Noahic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant.⁴ God’s covenant with Abraham promised a nation, land, and a seed. This was an unconditional covenant because it only depended on God. The Mosaic Law was a “tutor” to restrain Israel from sin and point to the need for a Savior. Although Israel committed many times to keep this Law, they always failed, breaking their part of the covenant. The Davidic Covenant promised a descendant that would be a king on an eternal throne. All these covenants point to the New Covenant. The New Covenant is Jesus who provides salvation for all who believe. Let’s make some general observations from these familiar stories: God established these covenants, God used these covenants to reveal His redemptive plan to mankind, and God keeps His covenants.⁵

How will we see God as a Covenant keeping God in these lessons?

With every new generation in the nation of Israel, there was a choice before them: choose for yourselves today whom you will serve. The Mosaic Covenant God made with Israel came with both blessings and curses. In other words, there were consequences for disobedience. In these lessons we will see Moses’ teachings about God, God’s faithfulness, and God’s protection. But we will also see Israel’s failures and desire to do things their way instead of God’s way. We will see God raise up leaders to rescue them and leaders to lead them into battle or lead them back to Him. God keeps His covenant with Israel no matter what. We will see that God grants victory when we seek Him, so we should always respond to our faithful covenant keeping God in worship.

As Moses says in Deuteronomy 7:7-9 our God is a faithful God who keeps his covenant: *“The LORD had his heart set on you and chose you, not because you were more numerous than all peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors, He ...redeemed you... Know that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps his gracious covenant loyalty for a thousand generations with those who love him and keep his commands.”*

The author of Hebrews, in Hebrews 10:23, likewise reminds us to *“hold on to the confession of our hope without wavering, since he who promised is faithful.”* These lessons ask the questions: Are you holding onto the hope we have in God? Are you choosing to do things your way or God’s way? Are you trusting in idols or trusting in our faithful, covenant keeping God? Like Israel, we must choose this day whom we will serve.



How Reliable is the Old Testament?

There are three areas scholars use to show the reliability of the Old Testament:

1. Textual Transmission¹
 - a. Jewish scholars had an elaborate system for transcribing scrolls. After completion the new copy was given the same authority as the older version.²
 - b. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in the 1940s, are roughly 40,000 fragments that make up 500 books, some of which are copies of the Old Testament dating back to a century before the birth of Christ. Thanks to this discovery, it is now possible to compare a copy from around 125 BC to a copy from 916 AD, and they are basically identical!³
2. Confirmation of the Old Testament by hard evidence uncovered through archeology.⁴
 - a. Archeology studies remains of past human activities and uses those remains to reconstruct that society.⁵ The evidence they uncover is usually fragmentary, so they focus on probable and plausible explanations, knowing that those could be completely upended by a new discovery.⁶
 - b. An archeologist can find something that agrees with an event from the Bible such as ancient ruins of the city of Jericho and how the walls collapsed. But archeologists cannot verify that it was God who caused those walls to fall flat.⁷ As more discoveries are made, more events in the Old Testament are being historically confirmed.
3. Documentary evidence uncovered through archeology.⁸
 - a. Documentary evidence is other written documents found by archeologists that confirm Old Testament history directly or indirectly.⁹
 - b. Here are a few examples of documentary evidence:
 - i. The Greeks, Hindus, Chinese, Mexicans, Algonquins, Hawaiians and Sumerians all have some type of a flood sweeping over the earth, but only in Genesis do we have dates and details of the boat built that survived the flood.¹⁰
 - ii. Ur- Naamu, a king of Ur from 2044-2007 BC, claimed to have received orders to build a great tower to a moon god. But in further reading on the clay tablets this tower made the gods mad so the tower was destroyed, and their speech confused so they scattered. Sumerian literature also alludes to a single language.¹¹
 - iii. There are also sources that document the patriarchs all the way to Joseph and the Israelites in Egypt, the Assyrian capture of the Northern tribes of Israel, and the Babylonian captivity, to list a few examples.¹²

Archeological findings are always open to interpretation, but sometimes the most probable and plausible explanation that best fits the context certainly seems to be connected to the narratives that we find in the Old Testament. Then you add to that writings from other people groups that mention events and customs also mentioned in the Bible and there is good evidence that the Old Testament is not just a collection of myths and heroic tales about the fathers of the nation, but a historical narrative rooted in facts. We can trust that God's Word has been meticulously handed down through the generations and that God's Word is truth!

March 3 – God who is Faithful

Text: Numbers 14:10b-38

Big Idea: The Lord's faithful love toward His people does not diminish His justice and righteousness. God is both infinitely loving and ultimately just.

Focus: *Use this section to open in a large group or small group setting.*

Option 1: What did you learn about God this week in your reading? What is your favorite God shot?

Option 2: What causes you to lose your patience?

Study: *Use this section for your small group Bible study time.*

About this book:

The book of Numbers picks up the story after the Israelites have completed their exodus from Egypt. They had spent about a year at Mount Sinai learning what God expected of them as a people. Most of the first ten chapters take place at the base of Mount Sinai. In the middle of chapter 10, the Israelites begin to travel into the wilderness of Paran. They remain in the desert areas north of Sinai and west of Arabah through chapter 20. In the middle of chapter 21, they begin their journey to the plains of Moab where God prepares them for entrance into the promised land.

Introductory Material:

Reading and understanding Numbers 13-14:10 is crucial for this lesson. Chapter 13 describes the team of twelve spies who were sent into the promised land to do reconnaissance. Following the Lord's command in 13:3, one person from each tribe was to scout out the promised land and report back to the rest of God's people. After spending 40 days, they came back to the rest of the nation with a mixed report. They all agreed that it was indeed a land "flowing with milk and honey." However, 10 of the spies reported back that the people of the land were too powerful, and their cities were too fortified to be defeated by Israel.

Two spies, Caleb and Joshua had a different view. Though they agreed that the people would be a formidable enemy, they also believed that the Lord would deliver the enemy and the land to them. The 10 who gave the negative report caused somewhat of a riot. "The whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night." (14:1) They began to complain about Moses and Aaron and started hatching a plan to overthrow them and return to Egypt.

Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb all pled with the people to trust God and move forward. "Only don't rebel against the LORD, and don't be afraid of the people of the land, for we will devour them. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us. Don't be afraid of them!" (14:9) At this point the Lord apparently had enough of their faithlessness and belly-aching and He "showed up" in verse 10.

This is where today's story begins.

The LORD has had ENOUGH

Read Numbers 14:10b-12 and discuss the questions below.

¹⁰*The glory of the Lord appeared to all the Israelites at the tent of meeting.* ¹¹*The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people despise me? How long will they not trust in me despite all the signs I have performed among them?"* ¹²*I will strike them with a plague and destroy them. Then I will make you into a greater and mightier nation than they are."*

Commentary:

- As the Israelites threaten to stone their leaders, God shows up in power and glory (v. 10).
- God's frustrations with their lack of faith are palpable in reading verse 11 and 12. In the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Ronald Allen noted, "The anger of God against his people is at fever pitch. In a moment he would destroy them all. With a word they would cease to afflict him with their arrogance. By a plague the populace could be reduced to a handful. And God could begin again."¹
- R. Dennis Cole comments, "At pivotal points in the Bible, when humanity's sinful rebellion reached an uncontrollable crisis, God would intervene through wondrous means to demonstrate his power and glory, and then manifest his justice and grace by endeavoring to draw his crowning creation back to himself. From Noah and Abraham to Moses and Elijah, and finally and incomparably in Jesus, the story of His redemptive power has resonated through His Word to challenge those whom He desires to call His own to faith and fulfillment."²
- Allen added, "By refusing to believe in the power of the Lord, especially in view of all the wonders they had experienced themselves, the people of Israel were holding Him in contempt by their unbelief."³
- Allen goes on to remind us that God's anger here is directed at His very own people. "No one dares remain unmoved by these words of the expression of the wrath of God. We remember that this wrath was not against Canaanites or Hittites, not against the Egyptians or the Assyrians, but against his own people."⁴

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** Discuss some of the reasons God had to be angry with His people..
2. **Get it:** What are some of the "signs" the Lord is talking about in verse 11?
3. **Get it:** Note that God was suggesting that the people be destroyed, and He build a new nation through Moses' lineage.
4. **Apply it:** Do you get frustrated when someone close to you won't trust you? Imagine spending hours preparing a banquet of food for your loved one and they refuse to touch it thinking that you put poison in it.
5. **Apply it:** Do you ever fear the Lord may bring judgement or discipline on you? What prevents God from giving us what we really deserve when we disobey Him?

Moses Appeals to the Lord's Faithful Love

Read Numbers 14:13-19 and discuss the questions below.

¹³ But Moses replied to the Lord, "The Egyptians will hear about it, for by your strength you brought up this people from them. ¹⁴ They will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, Lord, are among these people, how you, Lord, are seen face to face, how your cloud stands over them, and how you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. ¹⁵ If you kill this people with a single blow, the nations that have heard of your fame will declare, ¹⁶ 'Since the Lord wasn't able to bring this people into the land he swore to give them, he has slaughtered them in the wilderness.'

¹⁷ "So now, may my Lord's power be magnified just as you have spoken: ¹⁸ The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in faithful love, forgiving iniquity and rebellion. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children to the third and fourth generation. ¹⁹ Please pardon the iniquity of this people, in keeping with the greatness of your faithful love, just as you have forgiven them from Egypt until now."

Commentary:

- Moses interceded on behalf of the people. "This role had been exercised previously in 11:2, when fiery judgment came down from the skies, and in 12:13, when Miriam was struck with a leprous disease. In the quail incident (11:4–34) his leadership was reflected in a different way in a dialogue with the Lord concerning the heavy load of responsibility that had been laid upon his shoulders."⁵
- This is similar to Moses' intercession following the incident at Sinai with the golden calf in Exodus 32. "The present text (vv. 18–19) shares several similarities with Exodus 34:6–7, indicating that Moses drew directly from the revelation in the previous incident with the golden calf. God had said he would forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin, though not leaving the guilty unpunished. The Exodus passage contains as well the challenge to obedience for the people to be faithful to the Lord so that they might see his wondrous works in driving out the inhabitants of Canaan (Exodus 34:10–14)."⁶
- More from Cole in the *New American Commentary*, "But God's attributes cannot be juxtaposed against each other; they must remain in balance. His love and faithfulness cannot be pitted against his justice and righteousness, such that sin and rebellion might ultimately go unanswered and unpunished."⁷
- A beautiful image of God's character is found in two Hebrew words found in verse 19. Allen described it this way, "The phrase כְּגֹדֶל חַסְדְּךָ (*k^egōḏel hasdekā*, 'in accordance with your great love') contains one of the most significant terms in Hebrew Scripture to describe the gracious aspect of the character of God, the word *hesed* best translated 'loyal love,' as this pairing of words ties together both the mercy and the loyalty aspect this word portrays. In Moses' impassioned plea for God to forgive the people, he heightens the focus on the Lord's loyal love by using the phrase *k^egōḏel* ('according to the greatness of')."⁸

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** Summarize Moses' initial appeal in verses 13-16. To which of God's great characteristics does he appeal?

2. **Get it:** Which of God’s characteristics does Moses mention in the second half of his prayer (v. 17-19)?
3. **Apply it:** How has God shown His mercy and forgiveness to you?
4. **Apply it:** What would you say is God’s greatest expression of being “slow to anger and abounding in faithful love?”
5. **Apply it:** How might God express His judgment and righteousness in our lives? In our times? In our culture?

The Lord Shows His Mercy and Righteousness

Read Numbers 14:20-25, 29-31 and discuss the questions below.

²⁰ The Lord responded, “I have pardoned them as you requested. ²¹ Yet as I live and as the whole earth is filled with the Lord’s glory, ²² none of the men who have seen my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness and have tested me these ten times and did not obey me, ²³ will ever see the land I swore to give their ancestors. None of those who have despised me will see it. ²⁴ But since my servant Caleb has a different spirit and has remained loyal to me, I will bring him into the land where he has gone, and his descendants will inherit it. ²⁵ Since the Amalekites and Canaanites are living in the lowlands, turn back tomorrow and head for the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea.

²⁹ Your corpses will fall in this wilderness—all of you who were registered in the census, the entire number of you twenty years old or more—because you have complained about me. ³⁰ I swear that none of you will enter the land I promised to settle you in, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. ³¹ I will bring your children whom you said would become plunder into the land you rejected, and they will enjoy it.

Commentary:

- The Lord responded to Moses that He would pardon them as Moses had requested.
- They would still face the consequences of their unfaithfulness. No one over 20 years old would enter the promised land besides the two spies who were faithful. All other adult men would die in the wilderness.
- Ogilvie points out that the Lord essentially pardons the nation while punishing the individuals who were disobedient.

"The distinction made here is that Israel *as a nation* was pardoned and still remained the people of God; but *that generation* of Israelites as individuals failed forever in the hope of their calling. For them, this was the end—not in the sense that they were no longer His people (for He still dealt with them in mercy in their wilderness wanderings), but in the sense that they missed their high destiny and entered a dreary 'second-best'."⁹

- Take note of the Lord’s testimony about Caleb in verse 24, “My servant Caleb has a different spirit and has remained loyal to me.” What a wonderful witness from the Almighty to the faithfulness of one of His men. Of course, the Lord would reward Caleb’s faithfulness both now and after the Israelites had occupied the promised land. (See the incredible fulfillment of God’s promise to Caleb in Joshua 14).
- In one way, God simply gave the people what they asked for. They lacked the faith and expressed an unwillingness to enter God’s promised land, so He granted their wish. The few, two adults who had faith and wished to enter, were granted their wish on God’s timetable.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** Describe the balance between God’s pardon and the consequences faced by these stubborn people.
 2. **Get it:** How did God grant the desires of the multitude?
 3. **Apply it:** How does our faith impact our ability to enter the inheritance the Lord has prepared for His people?
 4. **Apply it:** Is it because of our goodness or God’s faithful love that we might enter a future “promised land?”
-

Apply: *Use this section to conclude your lesson for today.*

This story shows many of the personal characteristics of God in an anthropomorphic way. Though God is not human, His emotions are sometimes described in human terms for us to understand Him. In this text, we especially see His anger and frustration with His people. In one of the great mysteries of Scripture, the Lord responds to the heartfelt intercession of Moses by not destroying the Israelites. Moses appeals to God’s power to deliver and to His faithful love even considering their continuous rebellion and unfaithfulness. The Lord grants Moses’ appeal showing mercy by granting a pardon while still maintaining justice. What did you learn about God from this story? What’s your God-shot?

March 10 – God Who is Sovereign

Text: Numbers 22-23

Big Idea: God is sovereign over all people and events, and we do ourselves unnecessary harm when we try to resist His will.

Focus: Use this section to open in a large group or small group setting.

Option 1: What did you learn about God this week in your reading?

Option 2: What is the strangest thing you've ever seen?

Option 3: Have you ever felt God use somebody who was not a Christian to teach you something important?

Study: Use this section for your small group Bible study time.

Introductory Material:

Where we are in the story:

So far in our Scripture reading for the year, we have seen the Lord create a people from the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and we have seen that people (the Israelites) freed from slavery by God through Moses. They have been promised that God would take them to a land “flowing with milk and honey.” Recently in their journey, they have defeated the Canaanite king of Arad as well as five Amorite kings who opposed them. They are currently spending 40 years wandering in the wilderness, so God can raise up a new generation to enter the Promised Land.

Immediate context:

The text today comes from the story found in Numbers 22-24, when Balak, king of Moab, attempts to hire Balaam, a prophet from Pethor. The king is afraid of the Israelites, who are camping nearby and have already conquered the Amorites (Joshua 10). He hopes that Balaam will put a curse on the Israelites and thereby let his armies defeat them. He sends two envoys of his officials with money and a promise of further honor if Balaam would only come with them and curse the Israelite army. Our text today will specifically look at what happened to Balaam on his way to meet Balak, as well as the first two of four oracles he speaks while in Moab.

Who is Balaam?

Balaam is considered a seer or prophet, but not one exclusively belonging to the Lord. He was a non-Israelite who practiced divination, which was an abomination to the Lord.¹ It is important as we read through these passages to keep in mind that Balaam is not considered one “in good standing” with the Lord, which helps us see even more how sovereign our God is!

Balaam's Donkey

Read Numbers 22:22-30 and discuss the questions below.

²² *But God was incensed that Balaam was going, and the angel of the LORD took his stand on the path to oppose him. Balaam was riding his donkey, and his two servants were with him. ²³ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD standing on the path with a drawn sword in his hand, she turned off the path*

and went into the field. So Balaam hit her to return her to the path. ²⁴ Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow passage between the vineyards, with a stone wall on either side. ²⁵ The donkey saw the angel of the LORD and pressed herself against the wall, squeezing Balaam's foot against it. So he hit her once again. ²⁶ The angel of the LORD went ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn to the right or the left. ²⁷ When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she crouched down under Balaam. So he became furious and beat the donkey with his stick.

²⁸ Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and she asked Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?"

²⁹ Balaam answered the donkey, "You made me look like a fool. If I had a sword in my hand, I'd kill you now!"

³⁰ But the donkey said, "Am I not the donkey you've ridden all your life until today? Have I ever treated you this way before?"

"No," he replied.

Commentary:

- The Moabites' fear was ironic, because although Israel was in the middle of a conquest of land as God led them to the promised land, Moab was not on the list of nations who would be overthrown. In fact, in Deuteronomy 2:9, we see a command from the Lord for the Israelites to show no hostility toward Moab, since He would not give them their land.²
- The envoy had brought divination fees to Balaam because they wanted him to curse the Israelites and the Lord had allowed him to go at this point in the story. However, we know from Leviticus 19:26-31 that divination was an unholy practice outlawed by God. Keeping that in mind, we might better understand how God would allow him to go with the men and yet be "incensed" about it. Although God can use evil for good (Genesis 50:20), we should not mistake God as taking pleasure in the evil act itself.
- Another possible reason for the Lord's anger in this passage could be tied to Balaam's unspoken motives. After all, we know from 2 Peter 2:15 that "he loved the wages of wickedness."³
- Anytime we find ourselves outside of God's will, we will experience some level of tension. In Balaam's case, whether it was his motives or his occupation, he had failed to fully align himself with God's will, thus ending up in a frustrating encounter with his donkey.
- This is one of only two times we see animals speaking in Scripture, the other being the serpent in Genesis 3. There is a double meaning here: just as the Lord would communicate a message to Balaam by making his donkey talk, so too would God later communicate a message to Balak, using Balaam. The effect of the speaking animal is to make clear that God can speak through any creature he chooses, with no credit to the creature.⁴ God can speak through whatever or whomever He wants.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** Why was the fear of the Moabites ironic?
2. **Apply it:** Have you ever found yourself outside of God's will? How did it go?

Balaam's Eyes

Read Numbers 22:31-35 and discuss the questions below.

³¹ *Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the path with a drawn sword in his hand. Balaam knelt low and bowed in worship on his face.* ³² *The angel of the LORD asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? Look, I came out to oppose you, because I consider what you are doing to be evil.* ³³ *The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away from me, I would have killed you by now and let her live."*

³⁴ *Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the path to confront me. And now, if it is evil in your sight, I will go back."*

³⁵ *Then the angel of the LORD said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but you are to say only what I tell you." So Balaam went with Balak's officials.*

Commentary:

- This encounter serves as a warning for Balaam. God reminds Balaam that disobedience to God's command not to curse Israel will mean death.⁵ In fact, this whole experience for Balaam is a witness to God's sovereignty and faithfulness to His people, as well as His hatred for evil. Since the Lord chooses to use him, he has an opportunity to begin walking with the Lord and serving no longer as a diviner for hire.
- It is important to remember the threat in verse 33. Any time we oppose God or actively work against His will, we put ourselves in a dangerous position. It can be lethal to work against God. This truism may be what Gamaliel has in mind in Acts 5:33-39, when he advises the Sanhedrin to leave the apostles alone, lest they find themselves "fighting against God."

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** What is this encounter a warning of?
2. **Apply it:** Have you ever found yourself fighting against God? What happened?
3. **Appy it:** Have you ever felt God was standing in your way on something? What was it?

Balaam's First Oracle

Read Numbers 23:7-10 and discuss the questions below.

⁷ *Balaam proclaimed his poem:*

Balak brought me from Aram; the king of Moab, from the eastern mountains:

"Come, put a curse on Jacob for me; come, denounce Israel!"

⁸ *How can I curse someone God has not cursed?*

How can I denounce someone the LORD has not denounced?

⁹ *I see them from the top of rocky cliffs, and I watch them from the hills.*

There is a people living alone; it does not consider itself among the nations.

¹⁰ *Who has counted the dust of Jacob or numbered even one-fourth of Israel?*

Let me die the death of the upright; let the end of my life be like theirs.

Commentary:

- After Balaam arrived in Moab, he had Balak build him seven altars with seven bulls and seven rams ready to be sacrificed. Then Balaam went to a barren hill to meet with God, telling Balak he will tell him whatever God says to him.
- There are two things which Balaam notices about Israel in verses 9 and 10. In verse 9, he refers to the Sinai covenant⁶ (Exodus 19) where God tells Israel they will be a holy nation. Remember, the word "holy" means "to be set apart." As Balaam looks on Israel from afar, he notices just this, that they are set apart from the rest of the nations.

- In verse 10, Balaam notices how large the nation of Israel is as he questions, “who has counted the dust of Jacob?” He notices what Balak had noticed: Israel has turned into a massive group of people. This should call to mind another covenant made with Israel: The Abrahamic covenant⁷ (Genesis 13:16) where God tells Abraham that his descendants will be so numerous that they could only be counted if the dust of the earth could be counted.
- In both verse 9 and 10 we see the people of Israel exhibiting evidence of their relationship with God. In both cases, we see covenants being fulfilled. When we follow God’s will, it is noticed by those around us. Indeed, if we find ourselves aligned with God’s will, then we will be a better witness to others of His goodness and grace. This worked so well for the Israelites, even Balaam the pagan prophet expresses here that he would like to be one of them.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** What two things did Balaam notice about Israel?
2. **Apply it:** Do you think people could see you are a Christian without you telling them? How do we live in such a way so that people can see we have a relationship with the living God?

Balaam’s Second Oracle

Read Numbers 23:18-24 and discuss the questions below.

¹⁸ *Balaam proclaimed his poem:*

Balak, get up and listen; son of Zippor, pay attention to what I say!

¹⁹ *God is not a man, that he might lie, or a son of man, that he might change his mind.*

Does he speak and not act, or promise and not fulfill?

²⁰ *I have indeed received a command to bless; since he has blessed, I cannot change it.*

²¹ *He considers no disaster for Jacob; he sees no trouble for Israel.*

The LORD their God is with them, and there is rejoicing over the King among them.

²² *God brought them out of Egypt; he is like the horns of a wild ox for them.*

²³ *There is no magic curse against Jacob and no divination against Israel.*

It will now be said about Jacob and Israel, “What great things God has done!”

²⁴ *A people rise up like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion.*

They will not lie down until they devour the prey and drink the blood of the slain.

Commentary:

- Balak is understandably unhappy with Balaam and his blessing of Israel. After all, he has hired a man to curse a people he hates, and Balaam has only admired and blessed that nation. So, Balak tries again, offering more sacrifices and asking Balaam to go to another place where he can see the Israelites, but not all of them. He hopes this might make a difference in Balaam’s willingness to curse Israel.
- Verse 19 speaks of what we often refer to as God’s “immutability.” God is not like humans in the sense that he will change his mind on a whim or alter his covenants with Israel simply because Balak offered up a few more sacrifices in a different place. God’s character does not change, and He never breaks a promise. Moreover, one can see a hidden threat in the phrase “does he speak and not act?” God would act to protect Israel, but He would also carry out any threats He made. Humans, however, are not like this: we sometimes make empty promises and empty threats. Praise God our Lord does neither!
- Although we often stray from walking with the Lord and begin to chase after idols and make our own plans for our lives, the Lord never moves and changes how He feels about us. He is consistent in His character, love, and power.

- Verse 21 mentions a “rejoicing over the King.” Another way to translate this is “shout of the King.” The term in the original Hebrew was understood as a kind of battle-cry of war. We can understand it as a kind of militaristic threat, implying the Lord would be the One leading Israel to victory in battle.⁸
- It is important to remember that God is the One leading Israel in their battles. They only win when God ordains the battle. Oftentimes however, they would stray into sin or forget to consult God before deciding to fight a battle, and they would often lose, such as in Joshua 7. We too, should remember not to fight battles without seeking the Lord’s direction, but we should also remember that when we align ourselves with God’s plan, we cannot be defeated.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** How is God different from humans according to this passage?
2. **Apply it:** What are ways we can ensure we are aligning ourselves with God’s will so that we might be victorious in our endeavors?

Apply: *Use this section to conclude your lesson for today.*

After this oracle Balak becomes upset again, taking Balaam to yet another place only to be disappointed there as well. Balaam prophesies two more times blessing the nation of Israel and then he returns home. The rest of Balaam’s story is sad. Although he experienced in this story what it was like to be used by God and even looked upon Israel with a desire to be like them, it appears he never truly begins to follow God, but most likely returned to his pagan ways. Shortly after Balaam’s oracles the Israelite people stray into idol worship, and it is later mentioned in Numbers 31 that Balaam was to blame. He is killed in battle by the Israelites and remembered in the New Testament for wickedness and inciting Israelites to sin.

Balaam was given a wonderful opportunity when he was used by God to speak blessings upon the Israelites. Instead of turning to God and following Him faithfully though, he instead turns back to his pagan ways, and it leads to his death. We must remember that when God moves in our lives, we are left with a choice on how to respond. We can turn to Him for salvation or turn back to our sins. Let us choose the Lord!

March 17 – God who is Jealous

Text: Deuteronomy 4:15-40

Big Idea: The LORD our God is jealous, compassionate, and the only true God.

Focus: *Use this section to open in a large or small group setting.*

Option 1: What did you learn about God this week in your reading?

Option 2: What is the most memorable speech you have ever heard?

Study: *Use this section for your small group Bible study time.*

About Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy is the final book of the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. Traditionally, Moses is believed to be the author of Deuteronomy. Regardless of authorship, the self-testifying source of Deuteronomy is Moses (1:1). Deuteronomy is essentially a transcript of Moses' final words to the new generation on the banks of the Jordan River before Joshua leads them into the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy can be divided into three main sections:

- 1) 1-11 - Moses' Sermons
- 2) 12-26 - A Collection of Laws for the New Generation
- 3) 27-34 - Moses' Final Speech and Death¹

Why a "second law"? The word "Deuteronomy" originates from a Greek word meaning "second law." The purpose of Deuteronomy is found in 1:5 - "Moses undertook to explain this law, saying..." The Hebrew word translated as "explain" is *be'er*. It occurs only three times in Scripture, and the other two times refer to clear handwriting (Deuteronomy 27:8 & Habakkuk 2:2). One way to understand Deuteronomy's purpose is to make the law "legible" for the new generation of Israelites. With this in mind, "Moses and Deuteronomy become a template for the kind of figure that Israel is going to need in every generation to keep their devotion to Yahweh."² In other words, every generation of Israel would need the Law made "legible" to them. This becomes the role of the prophets, like Samuel, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, who reframed the Law to their generations in ways that would make sense to them. Jesus does the same thing in the New Testament, most notably in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Each generation who follows Yahweh has the same choice as the ancient Israelites on the banks of the Jordan: to choose life and good or death and evil (30:11-20).

Setting the Scene: On the Banks of the Jordan

After the Exodus, where God miraculously freed his people from slavery, Moses led the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through the wilderness to inhabit the land God promised to Abraham over 400 years prior. On the way, Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai. However, the entire "Exodus generation" was tragically sentenced to death after they refused to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14). Today, forty years later, their children stand on the banks of the Jordan River with a second chance to inhabit the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. Since Moses cannot go with them across

the Jordan (Numbers 20:1-13), he gives his final speech on the east side of the river, equipping them with encouragement, laws, wisdom, blessings, and curses to carry with them into their new home.

The LORD your God is a Consuming Fire, a Jealous God

Read Deuteronomy 4:15-24 and discuss the questions below.

¹⁵*“Diligently watch yourselves - because you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you out of the fire at Horeb - ¹⁶so you don’t act corruptly and make an idol for yourselves in the shape of any figure: male or female form, ¹⁷or the form of any animal on the earth, any winged creature that flies in the sky, ¹⁸any creature that crawls on the ground, or any fish in the waters under the earth. ¹⁹When you look to the heavens and see the sun, the moon, and stars - all the stars in the sky - do not be led astray to bow in worship to them and serve them. The LORD your God has provided them for all people everywhere under heaven. ²⁰But the LORD selected you and brought you out of Egypt’s iron furnace to be a people for his inheritance, as you are today.*

²¹*“The LORD was angry with me on your account. He swore that I would not cross the Jordan and enter the good land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. ²²I won’t be crossing the Jordan because I am going to die in this land. But you are about to cross over and take possession of this good land. ²³Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you, and make an idol for yourselves in the shape of anything he has forbidden you. ²⁴For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”*

Commentary:

Get it: What do we learn about God in this passage? *The LORD is a consuming fire, a jealous God*

- God desires that his people will worship him alone. Recall the first two laws of the Ten Commandments: *“(1) Do not have other gods besides me. (2) Do not make an idol for yourself in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them, because I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers’ iniquity to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commands.”* (Deuteronomy 5:7-10)

Get it: What’s the big deal about carving images?

- What is idolatry?
 - “To worship the creation instead of the Creator is the essence of idolatry.”³ Notice that all the creations Moses listed parallel the account in Genesis 1:14-27. Everything God filled the earth with is mentioned here. Paul restates this idea in Romans 1:22-23 - *“Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.”* Creation was never intended to be worshipped. The purpose of creation is to be a gift to people (see Genesis 1:28-30, Deuteronomy 4:19, 22). Creation is also part of Israel’s inheritance (the Promised Land!). It is foolish to worship the gifts instead of the giver.
 - Throughout Scripture, especially in Deuteronomy, God lays out how to worship Him. God is such a complex spiritual being that His entire fullness and character cannot be represented by one specific earthly image. It’s simply impossible. Idolatry is worshipping anything other than God, whether it is another deity or simply an incorrect idea about Yahweh.

- Here is an example: In this passage and several other Scripture passages, God's invisible presence is represented as fire. This is an accurate picture of God, especially since it is how God chose to reveal Himself, but fire by itself does not fully encapsulate the full character of God. It shows his power, jealousy, and wrath, but not his lovingkindness, faithfulness, and mercy. **God cannot be limited to one singular image.**
- Additionally, remember what happened at Mt. Sinai when God spoke to Israel from his fire. While Moses received the Law, the Israelites were at the bottom of the mountain worshipping an idol - a golden calf, to be specific (Exodus 32). This is not just a call to flee from idolatry, but it also serves as an invitation to avoid the mistakes of the previous generation by choosing to worship God alone.
- The other reason why carving "images of God" is such a big deal is because God already made images of God. Genesis 1:27 says, "*God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.*" Though God made us as "images of God," we are NOT a fully accurate representation of God Himself. This is why we should not worship humans! We have corrupted the image of God with sin. Only Jesus, the Word made flesh, completely embodied both the image of God and the perfect likeness of God, since he was God.
- THE POINT: God's people were to be set apart (holy) from the rest of the Ancient Near Eastern cultures because they were called to be **people of the Word**, not people of images. The God of Israel cannot be accurately represented in an image because nothing measures up. Israel must worship the Creator, not the creation. Warren Wiersbe summarizes it this way: "The people heard God speak, but they didn't see any form of God. The Lord was making it very clear that *Israel would be a people of the Word*, hearing their God speak but not beholding any form that could be copied and worshiped."⁴

Get it: What does it mean that God is jealous?

- In the Bible, there are two kinds of jealousy: a sinful kind and a good kind.
 - The sinful kind is what most of us think of immediately. Sinful jealousy can also be referred to as envy or coveting (see Deuteronomy 5:21). It's the idea of wanting something you don't have (and often someone else has that thing you want).
 - The good kind of jealousy is what is being described here. It is an expression of God's love for his people. God's jealousy is desiring something that rightfully belongs to Him, and in this passage, that is His people exclusively worshipping Him. Like a husband is jealous for the exclusive love of his bride, God wants to be the sole object of His people's devotion.⁵

QUESTIONS:

1. **Apply it:** How can we be people of the Word today?
2. **Apply it:** Have you ever been tempted to worship God's gifts instead of God himself? What are some ways we can combat this temptation?
3. **Apply it:** What are some characteristics that set the church apart from the rest of the world?

4. **Apply it:** Why is it so important for us to know the truth about God?
5. **Reflection:** Are there false images of God in your heart? Maybe you find yourself worshipping the gifts God has given you. Or maybe you value nature more than its Creator. Or maybe you have an unbiblical idea about God in your mind. Pray that God will reveal these false images and help you to destroy them so that you can worship God alone. He is jealous for your love!

The LORD your God is a Compassionate God

Read Deuteronomy 4:25-31 and discuss the questions below.

²⁵“When you have children and grandchildren and have been in the land a long time, and if you act corruptly, make an idol in the form of anything, and do what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, angering him, ²⁶I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that you will quickly perish from the land you are about to cross the Jordan to possess. You will not live long there, but you will certainly be destroyed. ²⁷The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be reduced to a few survivors among the nations where the LORD your God will drive you. ²⁸There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see, hear, eat, or smell. ²⁹But from there, you will search for the LORD your God, and you will find him when you seek him with all your heart and all your soul. ³⁰When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, in the future you will return to the LORD your God and obey him. ³¹He will not leave you, destroy you, or forget the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them by oath, because the LORD your God is a compassionate God.”

Commentary:

Get it: What do we learn about God in this passage? *The LORD your God is a compassionate God.*

- “The punishment for idolatry is exile to a pagan land.”⁶ Paul says it this way in Romans 1:24-25: *“Therefore, God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator; who is praised forever: Amen.”*
- Not only can idolatry consist of worshiping God’s creation, but it also includes worshiping human creations. Moses says this practice is foolish because gods made of wood and stone are not alive. Psalm 115 picks up this language and expounds on it, saying in verses 5-8, *“They (the idols) have mouths but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see. They have ears but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell. They have hands but cannot feel, feet, but cannot walk. They cannot make a sound with their throats. Those who make them are just like them, as are all who trust in them.”* In other words, people who worship the creations of their hands are just as blind as their inanimate idols and will face punishment from God, the jealous, consuming fire.
- If you are familiar with the narrative of the Old Testament at all, you probably know that Israel did go into exile, several hundred years after they first entered the Promised Land. Jeremiah, a prophet to some of the Israelite exiles, reminded them of the promise of Deuteronomy 4:29 - *“You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart (Jer. 29:13).”* This is good news! From the very beginning, exile was never intended to be the end of the story for God’s people. If Israel repented from their idolatry and returned to worshipping God alone, God promised to forgive them and be found by them. And, as Moses said, the exiled Israelites did return to God and obey his commands (see Nehemiah & Ezra).

- Moses assures Israel that God will never leave them, destroy them, or forget his covenant with them. Paul assures us in Romans 3:3-4 that humanity's unfaithfulness can never nullify God's faithfulness. God remains compassionate, merciful, and faithful, despite our unfaithfulness to Him. There is hope for sinners!

QUESTIONS:

1. **Apply it:** Have you ever been tempted to worship something you have made? What steps can you take to combat this temptation?
2. **Apply it:** How does knowing about God's unwavering faithfulness impact how you confess sin?
3. **Apply it:** Our compassionate and merciful God had a plan of salvation for the exiled Israelites hundreds and hundreds of years before it even happened. Additionally, God had a plan of salvation for every human being before Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Can you trust God's sovereignty to work out the details and struggles in your life today? Why or why not?

The LORD your God is the Only God

Read Deuteronomy 4:32-40 and discuss the questions below.

³² "Indeed, ask about the earlier days that preceded you, from the day God created mankind on the earth and from one end of the heavens to the other: Has anything like this great event ever happened, or has anything like it been heard of? ³³Has a people heard God's voice speaking from the fire as you have, and lived? ³⁴Or has a god attempted to go and take a nation as his own out of another nation, by trials, signs, wonders, and war, by a strong hand and an outstretched arm, by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? ³⁵You were shown these things so that you would know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him. ³⁶He let you hear his voice from heaven to instruct you. He showed you his great fire on earth, and you heard his words from the fire. ³⁷Because he loved your ancestors, he chose their descendants after them and brought you out of Egypt by his presence and great power, ³⁸to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you in and give you their land as an inheritance, as is now taking place. ³⁹Today, recognize and keep in mind that the LORD is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other. ⁴⁰Keep his statutes and commands, which I am giving you today, so that you and your children after you may prosper and so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

Commentary:

Get it: What do we learn about God in this passage? *The LORD your God is the only God*

- A major theme throughout the rest of Deuteronomy is to **remember**. Moses recounts many things God did in Egypt and the wilderness throughout his speech. Why? Moses says here that these events were the greatest in human history (so far). Think of everything we have read from Genesis 1-Numbers 36. Moses says that the Exodus and the giving of the Law at Sinai top them all. That is worth remembering!
- The Exodus is the salvation story of Israel. God revealed himself through signs and wonders and miraculously saved Israel from slavery and death (Exodus 7-12). Cleansed by the blood of the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12), they passed through the waters of the Red Sea on their way to the Promised Land (Exodus 14). Now think about the salvation story of every church member today. God has revealed Himself through His Word. He miraculously saved us from the slavery of sin and death by the blood of the Lamb of God: Jesus Christ (John 1:29; Colossians 1:13-14). After

salvation, we begin a pilgrimage towards the Promised Land: heaven (2 Corinthians 5:1-10). This is the story of every believer today, and like Israel, it is important to remember! Salvation stories are the greatest events in history.

- God had a specific purpose for all the signs and wonders He performed in Egypt and the wilderness. “The plagues were revelatory” so Israel and all Egypt would know the Lord.⁷ God desired His people to know Him so they would know He is the only God and worship Him (4:35)!
- No other people group had ever heard God’s audible voice like the Israelites had (4:36). It is a big deal to know the Word of God. The Law Israel received at Mount Sinai became the foundation for their entire culture: moral code, government, diet, relationships, religion, and much more. Today, we have an entire book filled with the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and it should guide how we live.
- It is crucial to note verse 37: “*Because he loved your ancestors, he chose their descendants after them.*” Think back to our study of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Genesis 12-35). There was nothing particularly special about them, and they did some messed-up stuff sometimes, like all of us. God did not choose them because they were special righteous people; he chose them because he loved them. Moses reminds the Israelites of this fact repeatedly throughout Deuteronomy, especially in chapters 7-9. Likewise, though we did nothing to deserve salvation, He chose to save us and establish a new covenant with us through Jesus because of His love (Ephesians 1:3-6).
- Verse 40 summarizes the response to all this: Knowing that God is jealous, compassionate, and the only true God, Israel was called to obey his statutes and commandments. The proper response to all this is to worship and obey the one God. This is the path to life.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Apply it:** Why is it so important to remember what God has done in our lives? How has God revealed himself to you?
2. **Apply it:** Do you have a salvation story? If so, share with the group, if you feel so led. If not, do you want one?
3. **Apply it:** How does the Word of God inform how we should live?
4. **Apply it:** What did you learn about God today? How does this impact your life?

Apply: *Use this section to conclude your lesson for today.*

In this small fragment of Moses’ final speech to the new generation of Israelites, he introduces God as jealous, compassionate, and the only God. He encourages them to worship God alone and to avoid idolatry: worshipping anything else other than God, including creation, ideas, or man-made things. As you have encountered God today, you now have the same choice the ancient Israelites had. Will you set aside the idols in your life to worship and obey the God of Israel? Or will you continue living in spiritual blindness as you follow your idols? Choose for yourself today: *life or death.*

March 24 – God Who Exposes Sin

Text: Joshua 7:1-26

Big Idea: Sin cannot hide from the Holy God.

Focus *Use this section to open in a large group or small group setting.*

Option 1: What did you learn about God this week in your reading?

Option 2: Have you ever felt exposed or vulnerable? What was that like?

Study: *Use this section for your small group Bible study time.*

About Joshua:

- Joshua is the first book immediately after the Pentateuch.
- It can be divided into three parts:¹
 - I. Conquest of the land (1:1 - 12:24)
 - II. Division of the land (13:1 - 22:34)
 - III. Joshua's farewell address and death (23:1 - 24:33)
- Something to be noted: many, many years take place during the book of Joshua. Wars and conquests that may have gone on for years are described very briefly in many accounts throughout the book.
- The traditional view of authorship is Joshua himself, or an inspired writer who was near Joshua.²

Where are we in the story?

Before going over all that's happened, ask your class what they remember of the over-arching story to this point.

A LOT has happened leading up to Joshua 7, so here are some of the anchor events:

- God blessed Abraham and his decedents, initiating an everlasting covenant with them to bless the nations (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:15-18).
- The decedents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are enslaved in Egypt for over 400 years, but God sends Moses to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 3:1-22; 40:1-2).
- God gives Moses and the Israelites the Law and establishes a new covenant with them on Mount Sanai (Exodus 19-24).
- The Lord brings Moses and the Israelites to the land of Canaan: The Promised Land. Though the Lord promised the Israelites victory, the Israelites did not trust God. Thus, their consequence was to wander the wilderness until the current generation of Israelites had passed away (Numbers 14).
- After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness and relying on the Lord's provision, a new generation of Israelites now lives and the Israelites are brought back to Canaan, but before they enter, Moses reintroduces and explains the law to this new generation (Deuteronomy).
- Before Moses dies, the Lord instructs Moses to place Joshua in charge of all the people and gives a final warning to obey the Lord their God so that they do not fall to the same fate as the previous generation (Deuteronomy 31).

- The Lord gives victory to Joshua and the Israelites over Jericho, sparing Rahab and their family due to Rahab's fear of the Lord. *The Israelites were instructed to destroy everything and take nothing for themselves (Joshua 6:16-19).*

The People's Sin

Read Joshua 7:1-9 and discuss the questions below.

¹ *The Israelites, however, were unfaithful regarding the things set apart for destruction. Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of what was set apart, and the Lord's anger burned against the Israelites.*

² *Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and told them, "Go up and scout the land." So the men went up and scouted Ai.*

³ *After returning to Joshua they reported to him, "Don't send all the people, but send about two thousand or three thousand men to attack Ai. Since the people of Ai are so few, don't wear out all our people there." ⁴ So about three thousand men went up there, but they fled from the men of Ai. ⁵ The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of them and chased them from outside the city gate to the quarries, striking them down on the descent. As a result, the people lost heart.*

⁶ *Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell facedown to the ground before the ark of the Lord until evening, as did the elders of Israel; they all put dust on their heads. ⁷ "Oh, Lord God," Joshua said, "why did you ever bring these people across the Jordan to hand us over to the Amorites for our destruction? If only we had been content to remain on the other side of the Jordan! ⁸ What can I say, Lord, now that Israel has turned its back and run from its enemies? ⁹ When the Canaanites and all who live in the land hear about this, they will surround us and wipe out our name from the earth. Then what will you do about your great name?"*

Commentary:

Get it: What can we see of God's character and nature? (What's your God-shot in this passage?)

- God is a fair & just judge to sin (v.1).
- God sees all (v.1).
- No matter how wise or smart the plan is, if God is not a part of it, it will not succeed (v. 2-5).
- God is present to hear our prayers (v.6-9).

Get it: How were the Israelites unfaithful?

- In the previous chapter, the Israelites were instructed to set apart everything in Jericho for the Lord and were warned that if they took anything that Israel would face consequences.
 - *But the city and everything in it are set apart to the LORD for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and everyone with her in the house will live, because she hid the messengers we sent. But keep yourselves from the things set apart, or you will be set apart for destruction. If you take any of those things, you will set apart the camp of Israel for destruction and make trouble for it. For all the silver and gold, and the articles of bronze and iron, are dedicated to the LORD and must go into the LORD's treasury." (Joshua 6:17-19).*
- Even with that command from the Lord, Achan of the tribe of Judah saw fit to keep some of what was set apart for himself (v.1). And yet, note that the passage doesn't say "Achan was unfaithful to the Lord and the Lord's anger burned against him." Instead, it says "The Israelites were unfaithful," and "the Lord's anger burned against the Israelites." Perhaps some of Achan's

friends and family knew of his sin and were silent, but in any case, the consequences were not just on Achan, all of Israel was held accountable.

- “God made it clear that it was *Israel* that had sinned and not just Achan alone (Joshua 7:1, 11). Why would God blame the whole nation for the disobedience of only one soldier? Because Israel was *one people in the Lord* and not just an assorted collection of tribes, clans, families, and individuals. God dwelt in the midst of their camp, and this made the Jews the Lord’s special people (Exodus 19:5–6). Jehovah God walked about in their camp, and therefore the camp was to be kept holy (Deuteronomy 23:14). Anyone who disobeyed God defiled the camp, and this defilement affected their relationship to the Lord and to one another.”³
- Wiersbe also points out that when the spies returned, they never mentioned anything about the Lord, instead they were only concerned with human figures. Their confidence was in their army and in their previous victory at Jericho.⁴ *Their confidence was not in the Lord.* This is further reflected in Joshua’s response in verses 6-9. Joshua questions God instead of considering the consequences of disobeying God’s command. How quickly we can forget the Lord’s provision and commands!
 - On this same note: notice that the ark of the LORD (which typically in the Old Testament signified the Lord’s presence) is not mentioned until after the failure at Ai.⁵ Just like Joshua, we too are often quick to seek God in the midst of failure, but then tarry in seasons of blessings. We should strive to remember the Lord our God who has delivered us from our sin *in every season.*
- We do see a little into the heart of Joshua here for his concern in his prayer isn’t entirely about himself or the people, but he also cries out, *Then what will you do about your great name?* (v.9)

Get it: What were the immediate consequences?

- The Israelites had a smart plan. The city of Ai had few defenses, so sending a smaller force would be, by all human standards, a good decision to utilize soldiers and resources well. However, because the Lord’s anger burned against them, their conquest ultimately failed.
 - Deuteronomy 32:30: *How could one pursue a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, unless the Lord had given them up?*
- In the case of this story in Scripture, men died because of the thoughtless actions of another. *Sin had brought death.* Sin never affects just you. It will always affect those around you, even when you don’t see it immediately.
- Not only did men die, but it says *“the people lost heart”* (v.5). Other translations may say their hearts “melted” or “became like water.” In every facet, sin takes a toll. It destroys the spirit, grieves the heart, corrupts the mind, and defiles the body. In losing heart, Joshua looked back across the Jordan and wished they had been content there. “When you walk by faith, you will claim all that God has for you; *but unbelief is always content to settle for something less than God’s best.*”⁶

QUESTIONS:

1. **Apply it:** If God treated Israel’s sin’s collectively as they were one people, what implications might that have for us as *“one body with Christ”* (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)? Can the sins of one person affect the whole church?
2. **Apply it:** What’s your process for making an important life decision? How do we discern if our choices line up with God’s will?

3. **Apply it:** What seasons in life do you find yourself seeking God the most? In seasons of blessing, or in seasons of turmoil? How might we remember to seek the Lord in every season?

The LORD Speaks

Read Joshua 7:10-15 and discuss the questions below.

¹⁰ *The Lord then said to Joshua, “Stand up! Why have you fallen facedown? ¹¹ Israel has sinned. They have violated my covenant that I appointed for them. They have taken some of what was set apart. They have stolen, deceived, and put those things with their own belongings. ¹² This is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. They will turn their backs and run from their enemies, because they have been set apart for destruction. I will no longer be with you unless you remove from among you what is set apart.*

¹³ *“Go and consecrate the people. Tell them to consecrate themselves for tomorrow, for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There are things that are set apart among you, Israel. You will not be able to stand against your enemies until you remove what is set apart. ¹⁴ In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe the Lord selects is to come forward clan by clan. The clan the Lord selects is to come forward family by family. The family the Lord selects is to come forward man by man. ¹⁵ The one who is caught with the things set apart must be burned, along with everything he has, because he has violated the Lord’s covenant and committed an outrage in Israel.”*

Commentary:

Get it: What can we see of God’s character and nature? (What’s your God-shot in this passage?)

- Our God is a God who answers prayer (v.10).
- God provides the way for us to reconcile with Him (v.13-15).
- God is a consuming fire (v.15).

Get it: Why did God rebuke the Israelites and what did He tell them to do?

- As stated before, Israel had sinned! The Hebrew word for “sinned” in verse 11 is *hātā* (חָטָא) which literally means miss the mark. Not only did they miss the mark, but they violated or crossed over (עָבַר: עָבַר) God’s covenant with them.
- Thankfully, God doesn’t let us stay in our sin, He provides for us a way to be reconciled back to Him. In verses 13-15, God instructs Joshua with how to weed out the one who brought all the trouble upon Israel. And once the man is found, the punishment is severe: why is that?
 - Think about it this way:
 - First and foremost, Achan went against God’s Word and sinned directly against God. (See Joshua 6:18)
 - Not only did Achan sin, but he sinned after Israel had been wandering the desert for 40 years, and in that time, God sanctified and provided for Israel over and over, warning and teaching the people through Moses. Achan should have known better than to disobey the Lord Almighty.
 - Also, Achan showed that he wasn’t satisfied. God was bringing Israel to the Promised Land to provide for Israel and bless them richly, but what God had promised wasn’t enough for Achan.
 - Lastly, what Achan did was done with deceit and lies. He knew the consequences of his actions, but tried to hide from them in darkness as if God couldn’t see what he did despite what might happen to his fellow people.
 - “This sin involved *stealing from God* and then *lying about it* (v. 11). Achan had taken the forbidden wealth but pretended that he had

obeyed the Lord. Achan had done a foolish thing (v. 15) in thinking he could rob God and get away with it. Israel couldn't face any of her enemies until their sin had been put away. The tribes could never claim their inheritance as long as one man clung to his forbidden treasures. Everything God had done for His people up to this point was to no avail as long as they couldn't go forward in victory. What a lesson for the church today!"⁷

- Times of suffering don't always mean that someone has sinned (for example, the story of Job or the blind man in John 9). However, times of trial should make us pause and seek the Lord. It is never a bad thing to seek God and humbly acknowledge that we often sin unintentionally. This is why David prays in Psalm 19:12: *Who perceives his unintentional sins? Cleanse me from my hidden faults.*
 - "Times of danger and trouble should be times of reformation. We should look at home, into our own hearts, into our own houses, and make diligent search to find out if there be not some accursed thing there, which God sees and abhors; some secret lust, some unlawful gain, some undue withholding from God or from others. We cannot prosper, until the accursed thing be destroyed out of our hearts, and put out of our habitations and our families, and forsaken in our lives."⁸

QUESTIONS:

1. **Apply it:** In light of Israel's sin, God charges Joshua to take immediate action. How do you react whenever God exposes sin in your life? Do you seek reconciliation with God and neighbor? What are some things that might make us hesitate to repent?
2. **Reflect:** While we may look at the punishment God had prescribed in this passage as severe; the fact is we are all Achan. We have all missed the mark and all deserve God's wrath, but thanks be to God, He gave us the Way of salvation through Christ Jesus! Give thanks today for that truth if you are a believer!

Israel Obeys

Read Joshua 7:16-26 and discuss the questions below.

¹⁶ Joshua got up early the next morning. He had Israel come forward tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was selected. ¹⁷ He had the clans of Judah come forward, and the Zerahite clan was selected. He had the Zerahite clan come forward by heads of families, and Zabdi was selected. ¹⁸ He then had Zabdi's family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was selected.

¹⁹ So Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and make a confession to him. I urge you, tell me what you have done. Don't hide anything from me."

²⁰ Achan replied to Joshua, "It is true. I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I did: ²¹ When I saw among the spoils a beautiful cloak from Babylon, five pounds of silver, and a bar of gold weighing a pound and a quarter, I coveted them and took them. You can see for yourself. They are concealed in the ground inside my tent, with the silver under the cloak." ²² So Joshua sent messengers who ran to the tent, and there was the cloak, concealed in his tent, with the silver underneath. ²³ They took the things from inside the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites, and spread them out in the Lord's presence.

²⁴ Then Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the cloak, and the bar of gold, his sons and daughters, his ox, donkey, and sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and brought

them up to the Valley of Achor. ²⁵ Joshua said, “Why have you brought us trouble? Today the Lord will bring you trouble!” So all Israel stoned them to death. They burned their bodies, threw stones on them, ²⁶ and raised over him a large pile of rocks that remains still today. Then the Lord turned from his burning anger. Therefore that place is called the Valley of Achor still today.

Commentary:

Get it: What can we see of God’s character and nature? (What’s your God-shot in this passage?)

- God exposes sin (v.16-20).
- God is both a God of wrath (v.25), but also a God of mercy (v.26).

Get it: Once Achan was found out, how did he respond?

- It is worth noting that Achan, after likely an entire day of sifting, ultimately did confess his sin to Joshua. But, from what we are given in the text, we are not shown any signs of repentance or remorse.
- Achan lays out what happened (v.21):
 - He saw.
 - He coveted.
 - He took.
 - He hid what he did.
- Does this sound familiar? It is exactly what happened in the Garden in Genesis 3:6-7!
 - *The woman **saw** that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that **it was desirable** for obtaining wisdom. **So she took some** of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and **made coverings for themselves.***
- This is the pattern for many, many sins! May we be watchful and alert for the crouching lion that is sin!

Get it: What were the consequences of Achan’s actions?

- Achan and his family were all stoned and burned along with all their possessions. Again, this may seem harsh to our modern eyes, but consider the enormity of Achan’s offense. It wasn’t just God that he had sinned against, it was the also the people of Israel. His actions had gotten 36 (and probably more!) people killed.
- But why his entire family?
 - In Deuteronomy 24:16, God established a law that protected families from punishment.
 - *“Fathers are not to be put to death for their children, and children are not to be put to death for their fathers; each person will be put to death for his own sin.”*
 - This means that Achan *had not sinned alone*. His family was involved in helping Achan in some way shape or form.
 - *“(Achan’s) household was judged the same way Israel would deal with a Jewish city that had turned to idols (Joshua 13:12–18). Achan and his family had turned from the true and living God and had given their hearts to that which God had said was accursed— silver, gold, and an expensive garment. It wasn’t worth it!”⁹*
- God is *holy*. It is dangerous to be before God with sin. Sin is burned up, consumed in His presence. Apart from Christ, this would be our fate as well. Instead, Christ intercedes for us, turning away God’s burning anger. Hallelujah!

QUESTIONS:

1. **Apply it:** Is confession (Confessing your sins to God or with a brother or sister in Christ, James 5:16) a regular part of your worship with God? Why or why not?
 2. **Apply it:** It is clear in Scripture that God takes sin seriously. How can we also take sin seriously, but all the while “speaking the truth in love?” (Ephesians 4:15)
 3. **Reflect:** Is there any sin that has taken root in your life? Perhaps you too have seen something, desired it, acted upon that desire, and now are hiding what you’ve done. Or maybe you have sinned against someone in your life. If so, **do not let it fester any longer. Seek a brother or sister in Christ and confess to them and to God!** It is awkward. It isn’t fun. But it is amazing what God can do when you lay your sins before Him and trust in the healing work of Christ and have the support of the body of Christ. If there is sin in your life, please don’t wait, grab someone after your class or after services *today!*
-

Apply: *Use this section to conclude your lesson for today.*

From this entire lesson, what did you learn about God?

Leaders: if you have a whiteboard, maybe write up on the board all the characteristics of God you and your class learned today.

We serve a great and mighty God. He is worthy of our fear, reverence, and adoration, and He is worthy of our praise and thanksgiving, for He is also merciful, loving, and good! Thanks to Jesus Christ, we too can be like Joshua, bold and courageous in our faith to approach the throne of grace in our time of need (Hebrews 4:16). Let us be watchful for sin’s temptation, and ever remembering the Lord our God who has delivered us from the bondage of sin.

Psalm 51 setting by Isaac Watts

*Lord, I am vile, conceived in sin;
And born unholy and unclean;
Sprung from the man whose guilty fall
Corrupts the race, and taints us all.*

*Behold, I fall before thy face;
My only refuge is thy grace:
No outward forms can make me clean
The leprosy lies deep within.*

*Jesus, my God, thy blood alone
Hath power sufficient to atone;
Thy blood can make me white as snow;
No Jewish types could cleanse me so.*

*Great God, create my heart anew,
And form my spirit pure and true;
O make me wise betimes to spy
My danger and my remedy.¹⁰*

March 31 – God who Rescues

Text: Judges 4

Big Idea: Israel did evil in God’s sight, so He sent an oppressive military power that reigned with fear for 20 years, but when Israel cried out to God, He sent a team to rescue them.

Focus: *Use this section to open in a large group or small group setting.*

Option 1: What did you learn about God this week in your reading?

Option 2: Who is your favorite superhero? Why?

Study: *Use this section for your small group Bible study time.*

About this book:

We do not know who wrote Judges or exactly when it was written, but we do know the period the writing covers. Historically, Judges is sandwiched in between Joshua which covers the conquest of Canaan and 1 Samuel which covers the transition from a theocracy to a monarchy. Judges is a transitional book where we see what happens when Israel has no strong earthly leaders and chooses not to follow God and his laws. It spans about 350 years in the history of Israel.¹

Here is a basic outline for this book:²

- the prologue (1:1-3:6)
- the cycle of sin and salvation (3:7-16:31)
- the epilogue (17-21).

Back in Joshua 24:24, the Israelite people promised to worship the LORD God and obey him. But in Judges 2:10-14, we read that after that generation a generation rose up that did know the Lord and they did what was evil in the Lord’s sight by worshipping other gods. Wiersbe says of this passage, “Instead of exhibiting spiritual fervor, Israel sank into apathy; instead of obeying the Lord the people moved into apostasy; and instead of the nation enjoying law and order, the land was filled with anarchy. Indeed, for Israel it was the worst of times.”³ As Israel’s hearts turned from God, God disciplined them by sending people to oppress them. Then Israel cried out for rescue and God raised up a judge to deliver them. “The judges were military and civil leaders ruling during this time when the nation was a loose confederacy.”⁴ Although they rescued the people from their difficult circumstances there was never any deep spiritual change in their hearts, so the cycle kept repeating itself for generations.

This period in Israel’s history is turbulent and the stories in this book are disturbing and should evoke anger and outrage. With each judge things in Israel only seem to be getting worse. One particular evidence of this is the treatment of women.⁵ In the beginning we see the Canaanites taking girls (Judges 5) and Israel respecting women (Deborah) but by the end of the book the Israelites are sacrificing their daughters and leaving their concubines outside at night to be raped and murdered. The Israelites abandoned God’s plan and God’s Law, choosing to be like the Canaanites.

Judges 21:25 sums up this time in Israel’s history nicely, “In those days, there was no king in Israel and everyone did whatever seemed right to him.”

Introductory Material:

Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon on this passage once entitled, "Sin Slain."⁶ In today's lesson, we have a very real, physical battle that must be fought to defeat the very real enemy that is oppressing Israel. But there are also valuable lessons we can learn about the spiritual battles we fight against sin in our own lives every day. Just like in this battle, where God had already granted them victory and even fought for them, God has given us victory over sin through the blood of Christ on the cross and God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us fight those Spiritual battles, so we do not live in bondage to our sin, but we walk in freedom as believers.

Requiring Rescue

Read Judges 4:1-3 and discuss the questions below.

¹The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the LORD after Ehud had died. ²So the LORD sold them to King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera who lived in Harosheth of the Nations. ³Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD, because Jabin had nine hundred iron chariots, and he harshly oppressed them twenty years.

Commentary:

- 4:1 we read that Ehud is dead. You will recall Ehud from Judges 3:12-30. In verse 30, the writer tells us that after Ehud took out Eglon, there was peace in the land for 80 years. Ehud's death is apparently the catalyst for Israel to again do what was evil in the sight of the LORD.
- The Israelites were committed to their leader, not to the LORD. Wiersbe says, "Israel as portrayed in the book of Judges illustrates the difference between 'religious reformation' and 'spiritual revival.' Reformation temporarily changes outward conduct while revival permanently alters inward character. When Ehud removed the idols and commanded the people to worship only Jehovah, they obeyed him; but when that constraint was removed, the people obeyed their own desires."⁷
- 4:2 we read about God's response. God loved them too much to let them go their own way!⁸ God also told them back in Deuteronomy that He would bless their obedience and there would be consequences for disobedience regarding the Law He had given them. This is just like the consequences we face when we sin. Sin traps us and enslaves us and we can't break free. That is exactly what happened to Israel.
- So, who were these oppressors? Canaan was made up of city states. Since Jabin is called the King of Canaan, he was most likely the head of a group of kings that ruled these city states. His large army, his chariots, and his military commander Sisera gave him the power he needed to control the land.⁹ In Judges 5:30, Deborah provides some more insight into how Sisera wielded his power. She is imagining his mother looking for him to return home and the mother saying: they are dividing the spoil, a girl or two for each warrior, colored garments for Sisera and embroidered garments for me. These men were stealing from the people that lived in the land and kidnapping girls most likely to enslave them and rape them. They ruled with fear and a heavy hand of oppression.
- 4:3 Israel finally cried out to the LORD after 20 years. But they did not cry out to repent of evil they had done in the sight of the Lord, they cried out because they were being oppressed by a strong enemy. Iron chariots would have been a sign of great military strength. Israel at least recognized they would need God's help to defeat this enemy.

- God does not want us to live in the bondage of sin, that is one of the reasons He sent Jesus. We should not be like Israel and suffer for 20 years. Paul speaks of this constant battle we fight because even as believers we still have earthly bodies that still sin (Romans 7:15-25). But in Romans 7:24-25 Paul says, “what a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” Jesus has already won the victory over sin for us.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** What did Israel do once Judge Ehud died?
2. **Get it:** Who did God send to discipline His wayward people?
3. **Apply it:** Israel found it easy to wander from God after Ehud died, when is it easy to wander from God today?
4. **Apply it:** God still loves his children today, even when we wander. How does God get our attention and draw us back to Him today?
5. **Get it:** Did God get Israel’s attention? How do we know? How long did it take?

God Assembles the Rescue Team

Read Judges 4:4-11 and discuss the questions below.

⁴Deborah, a prophetess and the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. ⁵She would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to settle disputes.

⁶She summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, “Hasn’t the LORD, the God of Israel, commanded you, ‘Go, deploy the troops on Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the Naphtalites and Zebulunites?’ ⁷Then I will lure Sisera commander of Jabin’s army, his chariots, and his infantry at the Wadi Kishon to fight against you, and I will hand him over to you.”

⁸Barak said to her, “If you will go with me, I will go. But if you will not go with me, I will not go.”

⁹“I will gladly go with you,” she said, “but you will receive no honor on the road you are about to take, because the LORD will sell Sisera to a woman.” So Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. ¹⁰Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; ten thousand men followed him, and Deborah also went with him.

¹¹Now Heber the Kenite had moved away from the Kenites, the sons of Hobab, Moses’s father-in-law, and pitched his tent beside the oak tree of Zaananim, which was near Kedesh.

Commentary:

- One of the big ideas we see in Judges is how God uses inadequate, imperfect, and often totally unexpected people to rescue his people and this story certainly showcases that.
- God assembles a whole team of people to defeat Sisera and Jabin. When we battle with sin in our own lives, it is helpful to have a whole team of people around us. Deborah served as an advisor, encourager, and accountability partner. Barak served as the man who led the army, and Jael dealt the final blow to Sisera. Let’s meet this team.

- Team member #1 is Deborah. Verse 4 tells us that she was a prophetess and a judge. The phrase “wife of Lippidoth” could also be translated “woman of Lippidoth” so there is some discussion about whether she was married to a man named Lippidoth or from a town named Lippidoth.¹⁰ We also know from the song in chapter 5 that she is a poet and from Judges 5:7 that she thinks of herself as a “Mother in Israel.” She acted like a judge would act today, sitting under a tree settling disputes. She was clearly well respected in her community or people would not have come to her. But a judge was a very unusual role for a woman to have during this time. While we don’t know why she ended up in this position we can conclude from the text that God worked through her as she served in this capacity, so God had clearly placed her here and equipped her for this purpose. She agrees to accompany Barak on his mission.
- Team member #2 is Barak. Barak’s name means “lightning.”¹¹ He is summoned by Deborah, and Deborah basically asks him a question, “Hasn’t God told you to raise up an army and go fight Sisera? He has said He will hand them over to you.” This implies that God had already spoken to Barak. We don’t know if he was waiting on confirmation or if he just lacked faith to do what God had called him to do. Barak is mentioned in Hebrews 11:32-33 as one who administered justice and conquered kingdoms. Yet, he asked Deborah to accompany him. Again, we don’t know exactly why. Guzik speculates that he may have trusted in her connection with God more than his own.¹² While Wiersbe thinks that he wanted to have her close in case he needed another word from the Lord or needed help raising up the army.¹³
- Team Member #3 is going to be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. What is important in verse 11 is that this family had moved away from the rest of the Kenites, near Kadesh, which is about 6 miles east of Mount Tabor and close to the location of the battle we are about to witness. We know from verse 17 that this family had peace with King Jabin. We don’t know why he made this treaty, whether he was genuinely on King Jabin’s side or if he was just trying to stay neutral so he could survive the oppression in the land. But his wife is an important part of this story.
- Finally, this team was assembled from all over the nation of Israel. Deborah lives in the southern hill country, Barak lives in Northern Israel by the Sea of Galilee, and the troops are to be gathered from Zebulan and Naphtali to Mount Tabor which is in between. Imagine the travel and communication required to make all of this happen! (See the map¹⁴ on the next page)
- Also note: God gives Barak specifics about where the battle will take place, the Kishon river (Wadi Kishon), and that God would lure Sisera’s army there and hand them over.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** How is Deborah described in these verses? What makes her unusual for this time?
2. **Get it:** How is Barak described in these verses? What unusual request does he make?
3. **Get it:** What were God’s instructions to Barak regarding the battle? Who is going to win?
4. **Apply it:** How would you feel if you were in Barak’s shoes?
5. **Apply it:** God gave Barak a plan to do battle with the enemy. What battle plan does God give us to fight sin and keep from falling into temptation?



The Dramatic Rescue

Read Judges 4:12-24 and discuss the questions below.

¹²It was reported to Sisera that Barak son of Abinoam had gone up Mount Tabor. ¹³Sisera summoned all his nine hundred iron chariots and all the troops who were with him from Harosheth of the Nations to the Wadi Kishon. ¹⁴Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the LORD has handed Sisera

over to you. Hasn't the LORD gone before you?" So Barak came down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him.

¹⁵ The LORD threw Sisera, all his charioteers, and all his army into a panic before Barak's assault. Sisera left his chariot and fled on foot. ¹⁶ Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth of the Nations, and the whole army of Sisera fell by the sword; not a single man was left.

¹⁷ Meanwhile, Sisera had fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, because there was peace between King Jabin of Hazor and the family of Heber the Kenite. ¹⁸ Jael went out to greet Sisera and said to him, "Come in, my lord. Come in with me. Don't be afraid." So he went into her tent, and she covered him with a blanket. ¹⁹ He said to her, "Please give me a little water to drink for I am thirsty." She opened a container of milk, gave him a drink, and covered him again. ²⁰ Then he said to her, "Stand at the entrance to the tent. If a man comes and asks you, 'Is there a man here?' say, 'No.'" ²¹ While he was sleeping from exhaustion, Heber's wife, Jael, took a tent peg, grabbed a hammer, and went silently to Sisera. She hammered the peg into his temple and drove it into the ground, and he died.

²² When Barak arrived in pursuit of Sisera, Jael went out to greet him and said to him, "Come and I will show you the man you are looking for." So he went in with her, and there was Sisera lying dead with a tent peg through his temple!

²³ That day God subdued King Jabin of Canaan before the Israelites. ²⁴ The power of the Israelites continued to increase against King Jabin of Canaan until they destroyed him.

Commentary:

- It wasn't long before word got out that troops were being gathered by Barak at Mount Tabor. Deborah tells us in Judges 5:6-8 that the streets were deserted, and swords and shields were scarce in Israel, but Barak managed to gather his volunteers. Judges 4:10 says that Barak had 10,000 men. This is not much of an army.
- 4:13-14 Sisera plans his counter-offensive. He summons all his 900 chariots and all his troops to the Kishon River. This is clearly meant to be a show of force and power to scare away any attack from the locals so he and his king can continue to stay in power. Gathering his troops in the valley also pulls Barak's troops off the mountain, putting them at a huge disadvantage against both soldiers and chariots since they had limited weapons. But Barak had enough faith in God to lead his troops into the battle and the promised victory!
- 4:15-16 God fights the battle for Barak. The text says he threw Sisera and his army into a panic and Sisera was forced to leave his chariot and flee on foot. To see the details of this battle we need to check out Judges 5:4, 5, 21 in Deborah's song. Apparently, there was a huge rainstorm, complete with mudslides and the flooding of the Kishon river. Wow! That alone would throw into battle into confusion. But it was more than just an issue with the weather, Baal happened to be a storm god.¹⁵ These superstitious idol worshippers had to have been confused about their god raining on the battle, rendering their chariots useless. Barak's army was able to use their meager weapons and manpower to take out Sisera's army. They were defeated, except for Sisera. Probably not a coincidence that Barak's name means "lightning!"

- Like Barak, when we go to do battle with sin, we cannot fight that battle alone. We must rely on God to give us victory. (and having the right people around us encouraging us is certainly helpful as well)
- Deborah had promised Barak that the LORD would sell Sisera to a woman. Now you would think since she was at the battle that Deborah would get to do the honors, but there is a plot twist – that honor goes to Jael. Remember, she and her family had recently moved and were now within 6 miles of Mount Tabor, very close to the location of this battle, and her husband had a treaty with Jabin.
- Sisera knew all of this and did not think anything about Jael inviting him into her tent. She had a lot of courage because Sisera had a reputation for collecting girls and spoil on his exploits, why would anyone invite a man like that into her tent? This was also rather scandalous – a married woman inviting a man into her tent. However, no one would think of looking for Sisera there so he may have felt like he had escaped the battle with his life. But, after telling him not to be afraid and hospitably offering him milk and a place to sleep, she hammers a tent peg into his head. This seems an unusual weapon, but one of the jobs of a woman was setting up the tent when they moved locations, so Jael would have muscles and skills built up to use a tent peg as a weapon.¹⁶ She recognized this was a battle and she needed to stand with the people of God, not harbor the enemy.¹⁷ Deborah celebrates Jael in Judges 5:24-27, and she also provides some more details about Sisera’s death.
- In our personal battles with sin, we must not merely defeat sin, we must destroy it. Sometimes that is just turning away from something or someone that is leading you to sin. Other times it is very physically removing or destroying something in your life that is causing you to sin. But always this means allowing the Holy Spirit to work in your life to transform your character to make you more like Christ.
- Finally in verse 24, we see that not only was Sisera destroyed, but so was King Jabin. Judges 5:31 says that after this battle, there was peace for 40 years.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** Where did Barak camp with his troops? What is the advantage of that location?
2. **Get it:** What assets did Barak’s have?
3. **Get it:** How did Sisera prepare for this battle?
4. **Get it:** How did God defeat Sisera?
5. **Get it:** Who killed Sisera? How did he die?
6. **Apply it:** How does God help us do battle against sin in our lives today?

Apply: *Use this section to conclude your lesson for today.*

Israel was trapped in oppression because of their sin against God. But God used the faith of Barak, the encouragement of Deborah, and the courage of Jael to rescue his people from King Jabin and his mighty army. The rescue was temporary since Israel had cried out for rescue from their circumstances instead of crying out to repent of their sin. So, Israel kept falling back into this cycle of sin. Eventually God sent Jesus to pay the penalty for our sin and the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and transform us so we can be freed from sin to live for God. We do not have to be stuck in this cycle of sin. Praise be to God for sending a better rescuer, His Son Jesus!

April 7 – God Who Chooses

Text: Judges 6:11-24, 33-40; 7:1-15

Big Idea: God can use our weakness and timidity for His good.

Focus: Use this section to open in a large group or small group setting.

Option 1: What did you learn about God this week in your reading?

Option 2: Has there ever been a time in your life you had to rely on someone, even though you were scared (or rely on someone you did not fully trust)?

Study: Use this section for your small group Bible study time.

Introductory Material:

In today's study we will dive into the fourth (4th) time in Judges that the Israelites fall into sin. This time they had been at the mercy of the Midianites for seven years. Midian was not numerous enough to fight Israel alone, so they formed alliances or coalitions with other tribes, including the Moabites, the Amalekites, and other tribes from the east. God chooses another judge to raise up, Gideon. The Gideon and Abimelech narrative (Judges 6:1-9:57) is one cohesive but long story, so we will not be covering it in its entirety today. Gideon is also called Jerubbaal (see Judges 6:32, 8:29 and 9:1) This nickname means "let baal contend" and was given to Gideon by his father after he destroyed that altar of Baal¹ in Judges 6:25-27.

The Call of Gideon

Read Judges 6:11-24 and discuss the questions below.

¹¹ *The angel of the Lord came, and he sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, the Abiezrite. His son Gideon was threshing wheat in the winepress in order to hide it from the Midianites. ¹² Then the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said, "The Lord is with you, valiant warrior."*

¹³ *Gideon said to him, "Please, my lord, if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened? And where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about? They said, 'Hasn't the Lord brought us out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian."*

¹⁴ *The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and deliver Israel from the grasp of Midian. I am sending you!"*

¹⁵ *He said to him, "Please, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Look, my family is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's family."*

¹⁶ *"But I will be with you," the Lord said to him. "You will strike Midian down as if it were one man."*

¹⁷ *Then he said to him, "If I have found favor with you, give me a sign that you are speaking with me."*

¹⁸ *Please do not leave this place until I return to you. Let me bring my gift and set it before you."*

And he said, "I will stay until you return."

¹⁹ So Gideon went and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from a half bushel of flour. He placed the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot. He brought them out and offered them to him under the oak.

²⁰ The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat with the unleavened bread, put it on this stone, and pour the broth on it." So he did that.

²¹ The angel of the Lord extended the tip of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire came up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight.

²² When Gideon realized that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, "Oh no, Lord God! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!"

²³ But the Lord said to him, "Peace to you. Don't be afraid, for you will not die." ²⁴ So Gideon built an altar to the Lord there and called it The Lord Is Peace. It is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites today.

Commentary:

- The Lord's chosen instrument of deliverance for the Israelites would be a young man named Gideon.²
- Gideon was threshing wheat in a wine press (a pit carved out of rocky ground) to hide both himself and the wheat from the Midianites, who took everything (v.4-6).
- Gideon is timid, hiding away himself, he is no warrior, but the Lord was working to begin reassuring Gideon with His presence like He did for Moses (Exodus 3). The Lord is sending Gideon with the promise of the Lord's presence.
- Gideon's timidity leads him to request a miraculous sign from his guest. So, Gideon prepares a meal or offering, which was very substantial given the scarcity of their resources and offers them to the angel of the Lord.
- The phrase "the angel of the Lord" refers to a theophany, a visible manifestation of God to man.
- The Lord accepts Gideon's offering and vanishes, assures Gideon, and promises him peace. Gideon builds an altar there and calls it The Lord is peace (Yahweh-Shalom).
- The Lord then instructs Gideon to tear down Baal's altar as well as the Asherah pole and build an altar to God (6:25-32). But in his fear and timidity, Gideon waits until evening to obey God's commands.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** What did Gideon's words and actions portray about him?
2. **Apply it:** How often in your life do you approach God with timidity or fear?
3. **Apply it:** How does knowing God's presence is with you abate your fears?

Gideon's Need for Reassurance

Read Judges 6:33-40 and discuss the questions below.

³³ All the Midianites, Amalekites, and people of the east gathered together, crossed over the Jordan, and camped in the Jezreel Valley.

³⁴ The Spirit of the Lord enveloped Gideon, and he blew the trumpet and the Abiezrites rallied behind him. ³⁵ He sent messengers throughout all of Manasseh, who rallied behind him. He also sent messengers throughout Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali, who also came to meet him.

³⁶ Then Gideon said to God, "If you will deliver Israel by me, as you said, ³⁷ I will put a wool fleece here on the threshing floor. If dew is only on the fleece, and all the ground is dry, I will know that you will deliver Israel by me, as you said." ³⁸ And that is what happened. When he got up early in the morning, he squeezed the fleece and wrung dew out of it, filling a bowl with water.

³⁹ Gideon then said to God, "Don't be angry with me; let me speak one more time. Please allow me to make one more test with the fleece. Let it remain dry, and the dew be all over the ground." ⁴⁰ That night God did as Gideon requested: only the fleece was dry, and dew was all over the ground.

Commentary:

- Gideon summons support to take on the Amalekites and several of the Israelite tribes gather in support.
- God is with Gideon and has reassured him that He is with Gideon, but again Gideon's fears and doubt in God's words and presence flare.
- Gideon decides to test God again, but this time, He uses fleece. Then as if using the fleece one time wasn't enough, Gideon asks once more for God to reveal that He will allow Gideon to be victorious.
- "God's positive response to Gideon's repeated experiment with the fleece was a gracious concession to his weak faith rather than an indication that God was pleased with him for seeking reassurance this way. Similar actions by Christians today should not be necessary, but God in his mercy sometimes responds to such calls for reassurance."³

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** What was the purpose of the fleece?
2. **Apply it:** Are there times in your life where you are like Gideon, lacking faith and trust in God's words?

Reduction in Numbers and Final Doubts

Read Judges 7:1-15 and discuss the questions below.

¹Jerubbaal (that is, Gideon) and all the troops who were with him, got up early and camped beside the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them, below the hill of Moreh, in the valley. ² The Lord said to Gideon, "You have too many troops for me to hand the Midianites over to them, or else Israel might elevate themselves over me and say, 'I saved myself.'" ³ Now announce to the troops, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.' " So twenty-two thousand of the troops turned back, but ten thousand remained.

⁴ Then the Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many troops. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. If I say to you, 'This one can go with you,' he can go. But if I say about anyone, 'This one cannot go with you,' he cannot go." ⁵ So he brought the troops down to the water, and the Lord said to Gideon, "Separate everyone who laps water with his tongue like a dog. Do the same with everyone who kneels to drink." ⁶ The number of those who lapped with their hands to their mouths was three hundred men, and all the rest of the troops knelt to drink water. ⁷ The Lord said to Gideon, "I will deliver you with the three hundred men who lapped and hand the Midianites over to you. But everyone else is to go home." ⁸ So Gideon sent all the Israelites to their tents but kept the three hundred troops, who took the provisions and their rams' horns. The camp of Midian was below him in the valley.

⁹ That night the Lord said to him, “Get up and attack the camp, for I have handed it over to you. ¹⁰ But if you are afraid to attack the camp, go down with Purah your servant. ¹¹ Listen to what they say, and then you will be encouraged to attack the camp.” So he went down with Purah his servant to the outpost of the troops who were in the camp.

¹² Now the Midianites, Amalekites, and all the people of the east had settled down in the valley like a swarm of locusts, and their camels were as innumerable as the sand on the seashore. ¹³ When Gideon arrived, there was a man telling his friend about a dream. He said, “Listen, I had a dream: a loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp, struck a tent, and it fell. The loaf turned the tent upside down so that it collapsed.”

¹⁴ His friend answered, “This is nothing less than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has handed the entire Midianite camp over to him.”

¹⁵ When Gideon heard the account of the dream and its interpretation, he bowed in worship. He returned to Israel’s camp and said, “Get up, for the Lord has handed the Midianite camp over to you.”

Commentary:

- God knew the pride of Israel would have them boasting of their own power when they overthrew the Midianites, so he commands Gideon to reduce the number of troops for 32,000 to 10,000.
- God then calls for Gideon to reduce the numbers again. God gives his requirements to Gideon for a test, the men who scoop water and lap it will remain, but those who kneel to drink will be dismissed. So, the troops numbers are reduced to 300, specifically chosen through the test God gave Gideon. And God tells Gideon that with 300 men he will overthrow the Midianites (v.7).
- God then tells Gideon that he will be victorious over the Midianites, but knowing of Gideon’s fears, he gives permission (makes a concession?) for Gideon to take his servant Purah and spy out the enemy camp and receive encouragement and reassurance of his impending victory.
- The Midianites and their allies were numerous. But they were nervous and had been unsettled with dreams, fearing this battle would be a lost cause.
- Gideon heard the account of the dream as well as its interpretation and was finally convinced and worshipped and rallied the troops.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** Why did God reduce the number of troops?
2. **Apply it:** What are some ways we can seek reassurance from God when we doubt?

Apply: *Use this section to conclude your lesson for today.*

Gideon was weak and timid. Needing constant reassurances from God that He would be with him and deliver them. In his lack of faith, Gideon asked for miracles and signs to test God, instead of trusting God and all that HE had previously done for them. Yet, God chose Gideon for this special task and stayed with Gideon through all the tests he requested, revealing Himself to him and granting Israel victory over the Midianites.

The lesson of Gideon is a direct reflection of the spiritual state of Israel. They were turning to other gods to worship, they were turning their back on God, they were forgetting all He had done for them to deliver them from enemies and to provide for their needs. They were not acting like God's chosen people.

We too are often like the Israelites and like Gideon, we doubt and lack faith in God. Forgetting all that He has done for us. We try in our own power and strength to overcome, when we should, in our weakness, lean into God and His Word.

April 14 – The God Who Calls us by Name

Text: 1 Samuel 3

Big Idea: God knows Samuel by name and calls him with persistence and patience both into a personal relationship with him and into a role as prophet to the nation of Israel.

Focus: *Use this section to open in a large group or small group setting.*

Option 1: What did you learn about God this week in your reading?

Option 2: What strategies do you use to remember someone's name?

Study: *Use this section for your small group Bible study time.*

About this book:

In the big story of the Bible, we are coming out of the turbulent period of Israel's history we read about in Judges. The book of Ruth occurs somewhere during that time and re-counts the love story of Ruth and Boaz who are the great-grandparents of King David. This brings us to the opening pages of 1 Samuel. 1 and 2 Samuel were originally one long manuscript, it was divided by translators and has just been kept in its current form for centuries.¹ While the books are named after Samuel, Samuel's death occurs toward the end of 1 Samuel so we know that while he may have written some of the book, he did not write all of it. The first 3 chapters focus on Samuel and how he came to be in his position of leadership in Israel. The rest of 1 and 2 Samuel focus on the first 2 kings of Israel, Saul and David. Wiersbe has a great way to remember all of this: Judges – no king; 1 Samuel – man's king (Saul); 2 Samuel – God's king (David).² 1 Samuel covers about 115 years of Israel's history.³

Basic outline:⁴

- Chapters 1-12 Samuel's Ministry
- Chapters 13-31 Saul's Reign

Jen Wilkin describes First Samuel as a study of contrasts. "In it we will see the strong contrasted with the weak, the proud contrasted with the humble, external appearance contrasted with internal character, and the righteous contrasted with the unrighteous. First Samuel also shows us the tension between the sovereignty of God and human agendas and the tension between order and chaos. Ultimately Samuel points out the inadequacy of earthly kings and points us to the king of kings. It asks the question, who are you placing your trust in?"⁵

Introductory Material:

The Lord is mentioned over 60 times in the first 3 chapters of 1 Samuel.⁶ This tells us that the events that unfold as Samuel is born and grows up are all orchestrated by God. Samuel was the answer to Hannah's prayer to God to take away her barrenness and give her a son. Hannah promised God that she would give that son back to him. So that is exactly what she did, once he was weaned, Hannah took him to Shiloh to live with the priest, Eli. 1 Samuel 2 says that he grew up serving the LORD and he grew in stature and in favor with God and people.

God had special plans for Samuel. Wiersbe describes Samuel as God's "bridge builder."⁷ Samuel came onto the scene at a dark time that would mark the end of the period of the Judges. He was the last judge and the first of a new line of prophets.⁸ Samuel anointed the first two kings of Israel, provided spiritual leadership, and helped unify the nation.⁹ Today's lesson focuses on Samuel's initial calling to this incredible role he would have in the history of the nation of Israel.

God Calls with Purpose

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-3 and discuss the questions below.

¹The boy Samuel served the LORD in Eli's presence. In those days the word of the LORD was rare and prophetic visions were not widespread.

²One day Eli, whose eyesight was failing, was lying in his usual place. ³Before the lamp of God had gone out, Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was located.

Commentary:

- In chapter 1 Hannah cried out to God in desperation for a son that she was willing to give back to God. Then in chapter 2 God spoke to Eli about the sins of his sons Hophni and Phinehas and His coming judgement on his family. God needed a replacement for this family since Eli and his sons were priests. This brings us to chapter 3.
- Let's look first at Eli's leadership:
 - *The word of the LORD was rare and prophetic visions were not widespread.* This speaks of the state of the nation of Israel and the poor spiritual leadership of Eli. Their hearts were hardened and there was much corruption in the priesthood. God speaks to his people when his people seek Him and His ministers seek to serve Him.¹⁰
 - *His eyesight was failing.* This is most likely a reference both to his physical and spiritual eyesight.¹¹
 - *"Before the lamp of God had gone out."* In Exodus 27:20-21, Moses writes that one of the jobs of the priests was to keep the lamp of God burning at all times. This was a physical golden candlestick that stood in the holy place.¹² But that lamp was also a symbol of the light of God's truth that His people were to share with the world.¹³ This lamp that represented the light of God's truth was about to go out, because the priests were not doing their job taking care of the physical light of the lamp or sharing the light of God's truth with the world.
 - It is clear from just this passage that Israel needed new spiritual leadership.
- Look at the contrast in Samuel:
 - *He was a boy.* Josephus believed that Samuel was probably around 12 in this passage.¹⁴ This is the age of manhood in the Jewish culture, so that would certainly make sense.
 - *He served the LORD in Eli's presence.* Samuel ended up in this place, serving under Eli because of a vow his mother made to God. Yet, we see throughout this entire passage that Samuel was eager to serve. He served willingly with a humble heart. He was not like Eli's two sons Hophni and Phinehas at all.
 - *He was lying down in the temple, where the ark was located.* Samuel was certainly in the right place to hear from God.
- God calls in His timing, for His plans and purposes.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** How is Samuel described in these verses?
2. **Get it:** How is Eli described in these verses?
3. **Get it:** How is the spiritual condition of the nation described in these verses?
4. **Get it:** What contrasts do you see in these verses?
5. **Apply it:** When is it hard to wait on God's timing? What does the description of Samuel teach us about how to wait?

God Calls with Patience

Read 1 Samuel 3:4-9 and discuss the questions below.

⁴ Then the LORD called Samuel, and he answered, "Here I am." ⁵ He ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"I didn't call," Eli replied. "Go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

⁶ Once again the LORD called, "Samuel!"

Samuel got up, went to Eli, and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"I didn't call, my son," he replied. "Go back and lie down."

⁷ Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, because the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸ Once again, for the third time, the LORD called Samuel. He got up, went to Eli, and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli understood that the LORD was calling the boy.

⁹ He told Samuel, "Go and lie down. If he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

Commentary:

- God knows Samuel by name! Think of all the millions of peoples whose names were never even written down for us to reference all throughout history. Think about the small number of people whose names you know and how often you forget someone's name. Our God knows each and every person by name, and that includes you and me. How personal and loving is our God!
- Three times God called Samuel and three times Samuel ran to Eli. But God was patient with Samuel. Likewise, God is patient with us.
- Throughout Scripture there are generally two reasons God calls:
 - God calls us to himself. Romans 3:10-12 says that there are none who seek after God. Revelation 3:20 says that Jesus stands at the door and knocks and if anyone hears his voice and opens the door, I will come in to Him and eat with Him and He with me." God calls us to salvation. As sinners, salvation is not something we would consider seeking without God's intervention!
 - God calls people for special purposes. God called Noah to build a boat. God came to Abraham and called him to go to the land He would show Him and told him his descendants would be as numerous as the sands on the seashore. God came to Moses

in a burning bush and called him to return to Egypt to lead the Israelites out of slavery into the promised land. God called Isaiah and Jeremiah to be his prophets, an angel appeared to Mary to tell her God had called her to be the mother of Jesus, God even came to Saul on the road to Damascus in a blinding light to save him and call him to be a missionary. This is the call to special service for Him.

- Wiersbe says that Samuel's conversion and call to special service both occur in this passage.¹⁵
- Verse 7 tells us why Samuel was running to Eli: Samuel did not yet know the LORD, because the word of the LORD had not been revealed to him. Samuel needed some guidance!
- In verses 8-9, After Eli realized that it was God speaking to Samuel, he knew exactly how to tell Samuel to respond:¹⁶
 - Go, lie down – Be available to God
 - If He calls – Don't be presumptuous about God speaking
 - Say, 'Speak LORD' – Respond to God
 - Be a servant who listens – humble yourself before God

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** How many times does God call to Samuel in these verses?
2. **Apply it:** Why does God have to repeat himself?
3. **Get it:** Who finally understands that God is speaking to Samuel?
4. **Get it:** What advice does Eli give Samuel?
5. **Apply it:** How do we know when God is speaking to us today?
6. **Apply it:** Read Romans 3:10-12, why does God have to call us by name?
7. **Apply it:** Have you had the opportunity to be like Eli and provide guidance to someone who is sensing God but needs some direction (or maybe the reverse, Like Samuel, you knew of God but did not know God and needed some direction)? What did you do?

God Calls us to Reveal Himself to us

Read 1 Samuel 3:10-14 and discuss the questions below.

¹⁰ *The LORD came, stood there, and called as before, "Samuel, Samuel!"*

Samuel responded, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

¹¹ *The LORD said to Samuel, "I am about to do something in Israel that will cause everyone who hears about it to shudder, ¹² On that day I will carry out against Eli everything I said about his family, from beginning to end. ¹³ I told him that I am going to judge his family forever because of the iniquity he knows about: his sons are cursing God, and he has not stopped them. ¹⁴ Therefore, I have sworn to Eli's family: The iniquity of Eli's family will never be wiped out by either sacrifice or offering."*

Commentary:

- Verse 10 implies that perhaps a form of God physically appeared to speak to Samuel. Scholars refer to this as a “theophany.” Maybe this was a physical appearance, or maybe not because Samuel describes it as a vision in verse 15. We don’t really know except to say that this message was for Samuel, and it was from God.
- Samuel follows Eli’s instructions, and he hears God’s message. God is going to judge Eli’s family forever because his sons are cursing God and Eli has not stopped them. Guzik says that Eli had failed as their father and as their boss.¹⁷ He adds that neither a sacrifice nor offering can wipe out this sin. Basically, it is too late, God’s patience with this family was over!
- Let’s think about Samuel for just a minute. He grew up with this family rather than his own, so God’s message is about to send his entire world into a tailspin. Even the people in Israel will shudder. This was a lot for a 12-year-old boy to process!

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** How does Samuel respond when God calls to him the fourth time?
2. **Get it:** What message did God share with Samuel?
3. **Apply it:** What characteristics of God do we see in this message?
4. **Apply it:** This would have been a difficult Word from God for young Samuel to hear. How should we deal with difficult passages of Scripture as we read through the Bible?

God Calls us to Speak Truth

Read 1 Samuel 3:15-18 and discuss the questions below.

¹⁵ Samuel lay down until the morning; then he opened the doors of the LORD’s house. He was afraid to tell Eli the vision, ¹⁶ but Eli called him and said, “Samuel, my son.”

“Here I am,” answered Samuel.

¹⁷ “What was the message he gave you?” Eli asked. “Don’t hide it from me. May God punish you and do so severely if you hide anything from me that he told you.” ¹⁸ So Samuel told him everything and did not hide anything from him. Eli responded, “He is the LORD. Let him do what he thinks is good.”

Commentary:

Samuel’s Response:

- In verse 15, we read that Samuel lay down until morning. Notice it does not say that Samuel went back to sleep, because he probably could not fall back asleep after this encounter and message from God.
- When it was time, he opened the doors to the Lord’s house. Most likely this was one of his normal everyday jobs. We can surmise that Samuel went back to his normal routine and his faithful service. He did not assume an attitude of pride or arrogance after the events overnight.
- Finally, Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision. The vision was about Eli and his family so this upset Samuel and he had no idea how Eli would respond. This almost feels like a test – can Samuel deliver this difficult message to someone who has been a father figure in his life.

Eli's Response:

- Remember Eli was awake last night and knew that God was calling to Samuel.
- Eli addresses him as "son." This speaks of what kind of relationship they may have had.
- Eli asks about the message and warns Samuel not to hide anything from him. Eli knows that prophets and priests are to speak to the whole Word of God, not just the feel-good messages their audience would like to hear.
- Eli responds after Samuel tells him everything with simply: "Let him do what he thinks is good." Samuel confirmed the message that Eli had already received in chapter 2 and there was nothing that Eli could do to change this outcome. God was giving Eli confirmation of His word from chapter 2 and of Samuel's calling to be a prophet all at the same time! Perhaps that helped Eli deal with this harsh judgement because he knew God already had the next spiritual leader of Israel picked out.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** What did Samuel do with the message God spoke to him?
2. **Get it:** How did Eli respond?
3. **Apply it:** The message God spoke to Samuel was about judgement for sin, how hard is it to talk to someone about sin in their lives and God's desire for them to repent and return to Him? What makes having those conversations so difficult?

God Establishes a Relationship with those He Calls

Read 1 Samuel 3:19-21 and discuss the questions below.

¹⁹ Samuel grew. The LORD was with him, and he fulfilled everything Samuel prophesied. ²⁰ All Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a confirmed prophet of the LORD. ²¹ The LORD continued to appear in Shiloh, because there he revealed himself to Samuel by his word.

Commentary:

- Verse 19 says that Samuel grew. This is further confirmation that Samuel was still young when these events took place, as in not yet full grown. Most boys finish growing between the ages of 16 and 20, so younger than that!
- Look at how God establishes his relationship with Samuel:
 - The LORD was with him (on this side of the cross, we have the Holy Spirit who indwells us and is constantly with us).
 - The LORD fulfilled everything Samuel prophesied.
 - The LORD confirmed Samuel as His prophet.
 - The LORD continued to appear in Shiloh (this was the current location of the Ark and a place of worship for the people of Israel. Samuel met with God in God's house. This speaks of the importance of having a church home where you regularly meet with God)
 - The LORD continued to reveal himself to Samuel. Specifically in this passage, He revealed Himself to Samuel by His Word. This is still a way that God reveals Himself to us today. What an incredible gift we have in our Bible. God reveals Himself to us on every page, all we must do is read and listen as God teaches us through His Word.
- God does not call us to Himself in salvation or call us to His purposes and then leave us to fend for ourselves. Rather, He is a personal God who is with us!

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** How was God with Samuel according to this passage?
 2. **Apply it:** How is God with us today?
-

Apply: *Use this section to conclude your lesson for today.*

There is none righteous, no not one, no one seeks after God. Rather God calls us out of darkness into His light. He calls us out of bondage to sin into freedom through Christ. Our God calls us by name into His Kingdom. Then He calls us into His Kingdom purposes. What a good God we serve!

April 21 – God Who is Worthy of Worship

Text: Psalm 34

Big Idea: God is worthy of all praise because of who He is, what He has done, and what He will do.

Focus: Use this section to open in a large group or small group setting.

Option 1: What did you learn about God this week in your reading?

Option 2: Have you ever found yourself in a dangerous, possibly life-threatening situation? What was your response when you were rescued from the situation?

Study: Use this section for your small group Bible study time.

About this book:

- The Hebrew title (Sepher Tehillim) of the book means “praises” because almost every psalm contains some note of praise to God.¹ The English title (Psalms) comes from the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. The Greek word *psalmoi* means “songs”.
- The individual Psalms of the book came from several authors. David wrote approximately half of the 150 Psalms in the book. Other authors include Asaph, a Priest who headed the service of music (12), the sons of Korah, a guild of singers and composers (10), Solomon (2), Moses (1), Heman, a wise man (1), and Ethan, a wise man (1). Approximately 48 Psalms are anonymous.²
- The Psalms were written over a period of a thousand years, ranging from the time of Moses at the end of his life, to responses to the harsh years of the fall of Jerusalem and the resulting Babylonian exile.³ The final editor of the work was most likely Ezra.
- Traditionally the book has been divided into five sections corresponding to the five books of Moses, each section ending with a doxology. Psalm 150 is the closing doxology for Book 5 and for the Book of Psalms as a whole.⁴

Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Book 4	Book 5
Psalm 1-41	Psalms 42-72	Psalms 73-89	Psalms 90-106	Psalms 107-150

- Psalms is a book of poetry rich in the use of figurative language and hyperbole. Hebrew poetry employs parallelism wherein two or three lines are balanced and complete a thought. The Book of Psalms contains hymns, laments, songs of thanksgiving, royal psalms, enthronement psalms, penitential psalms, and wisdom psalms.⁵ Sixteen of the Psalms are considered Messianic Psalms, speaking of the coming Messiah.
- Many of the Psalms begin with superscriptions. While not usually numbered in English texts, these superscriptions are numbered as the first verses in the Hebrew text. These Psalms are best interpreted in light of the superscription since some of the Psalms, such as the one we will study today, have superscriptions connecting the Psalm with documented events in the Psalmists life.⁶

Introductory Material:

- [Psalm 34](#) is an acrostic, with each verse beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Interestingly, as in [Psalm 25](#), one letter (vav) is missing and the final verse interrupts the sequence making it stand out for emphasis.⁷ The purpose of the acrostic format in the psalm mainly seems to be as a device used to encourage learning and memorization.⁸
- Psalm 34 is titled *“Concerning David, when he pretended to be insane in the presence of Abimelech, who drove him out, and he departed.”* This superscription at the beginning of the Psalm points us to the historical events of I Samuel 21: 10-15.
- The psalm comes out of an embarrassing incident in David’s life. He was running from King Saul, who was seeking to kill him. He came famished to Ahimelech the priest, who gave him and his men the consecrated bread. David also took Goliath’s sword, which had been stored at the Tabernacle. An informant told Saul where David was at, so he had to flee again. This time, perhaps in panic, he fled from Israeli territory and went to Achish, the Philistine king of Gath. It’s rather bizarre, because Gath was the hometown of Goliath, whom David had killed! So here is David, carrying Goliath’s sword (which could hardly be camouflaged!), showing up in Goliath’s town! Achish, by the way, is referred to in the Psalm’s superscription as Abimelech, which may have been a dynastic title for Philistine kings (it means, “my father is king”), much as Pharaoh was a title for Egyptian kings. David wasn’t long in Gath before the servants of Achish said, “Isn’t this David, of whom the Israelis sing, ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?’” (See [1 Sam. 21:11](#).) So, fearing that he had jumped from the frying pan into the fire, David panicked. He decided to act like an insane man, scribbling on the city gate and drooling into his beard. Achish fell for the ruse. He sarcastically asked his men ([1 Sam. 21:15](#)), “Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this one into my presence?” And so, by his deception, David was enabled to escape. But his acting like a madman had dishonored God in front of these pagans. Then he wrote this psalm, praising *God* for his deliverance and denouncing deception ([Ps. 34:13](#)). So, what’s going on here? It seems that in reflecting back later on this close escape from death, David realized that in spite of his failure, God had been gracious in rescuing him anyway. He realizes now that deception and evil are *not* the way to the good life. Rather, seeking God for deliverance, fearing Him, and walking in His ways are the way to enjoy God and His blessings.⁹

Praising the Lord for who He is

Read Psalm 34:1-2 and discuss the questions below.

¹I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.²I will boast in the LORD; the humble will hear and be glad.³Proclaim the LORD’S greatness with me; let us exalt his name together.

Commentary:

- In response to God’s deliverance of him, David praises the LORD for who He is by:
 - Blessing the LORD at all times with praise always on his lips
 - Boasting in the LORD bringing gladness to the humble who hear.
 - Proclaiming the LORD’S greatness.
 - Calling others to exalt his name together with him.

- David could have boasted about how he had outsmarted Achish with his clever deception, instead he placed the boasting where it belonged, in the LORD'S goodness.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** What is David's response to God's goodness?
2. **Get it:** Do you think it is possible to truly experience gladness in the LORD without being humble?
3. **Apply it:** Have you ever been so overwhelmed by God's goodness that you just wanted to boast about God to someone else?
4. **Apply it:** Do you invite others to proclaim God's goodness with you?

Praising the Lord for what He has done

Read Psalm 34:4-10 and discuss the questions below.

⁴I sought the LORD, and he answered me and rescued me from all my fears.⁵Those who look to him are radiant with joy; their faces will never be ashamed. ⁶This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him from all his troubles. ⁷The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him and rescues them. ⁸Taste and see that the LORD is good. How happy is the person who takes refuge in him! ⁹You who are his holy ones, fear the LORD, for those who fear him lack nothing. ¹⁰Young lions lack food and go hungry, but those who seek the LORD will not lack any good thing.

Commentary:

- David's troubles were his own doing, but when David sought the LORD, the LORD responded by:
 - Rescuing him from all his fears. David's fears caused him to make foolish and dangerous decisions.
 - Took away his shame. Fleeing and using deception brought shame to David, Israel, and God.
 - Saving him from all his troubles. God saved him from his physical circumstance, but also from the fears that took away his joy.
- Vs. 4 David recorded the report of his deliverance. Because he cried and was delivered, he was convinced that God's people are never put to shame. Instead, they are radiant because God hears them and rescues them from their troubles.¹⁰
- Vs. 7 The Angel of the LORD could be a reference to the preincarnate Christ (Gen 16:9) but it could also be a reference to the Angels that God sends to minister to those "who are going to inherit salvation" (Heb.1:14). Most likely it is a reference to Christ. Either way, David was confident of the protection the LORD provides for those who fear Him. The declaration that the Angel of the LORD camps around those who fear God presents a military imagery of divine protection.¹¹
- Vs 7 & 9 The fear of the LORD here implies a deep respect and reverence for God as opposed to the terror that David experienced in his fear of man.
- Vs. 8 David implores his listener to taste and see that the LORD is good. He wants them to experience the LORD for themselves. Those who trust in the LORD experience genuine happiness – if they will only taste and see. All who fear the LORD, that is, all who are genuine worshipers, will lack nothing, or no good thing.¹² James 1:17 reminds us that "every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows". His goodness can be trusted.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** Thinking back to the events in I Samuel, what were David's fears? (*See introductory material*)
2. **Get it:** The Angel of the LORD is probably a reference to whom?
3. **Get it:** What does it mean to fear the LORD?
4. **Get it:** What are some of the benefits in verses 4-10 that David lists that come from seeking and fearing God?
5. **Apply it:** Have you ever tasted something so good that you kept craving it? Is that the way that you feel about God's goodness?
6. **Apply it:** Are any of the benefits of verses 4-10 missing in your life? How can you remedy that?

Learning to fear the Lord

Read Psalm 34:11-14 and discuss the questions below.

¹¹Come, children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. ¹²Who is someone who desires life, loving a long life to enjoy what is good? ¹³Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from deceitful speech. ¹⁴Turn away from evil and do what is good; seek peace and pursue it.

Commentary:

- David instructs his learners that if they want to live a long and happy life to keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech; to turn away from evil, do good, seek peace, and pursue it. This is wisdom teaching about the way of the righteous, which produces a life of quality with God's blessing.¹³ David learned the hard way that the path to God's blessing is to depart from evil, not turn toward it.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** What elements does David say will produce a life of God's blessing?
2. **Apply it:** On a scale of 1-10 how do you feel you are doing in light of verses 13-14?

Those who fear the Lord and those who don't

Read Psalm 34:15-22 and discuss the questions below.

¹⁵The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry for help. ¹⁶The face of the LORD is set against those who do what is evil, to remove all memory of them from the earth. ¹⁷The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and rescues them from all their troubles. ¹⁸The LORD is near the brokenhearted; he saves those crushed in spirit. ¹⁹One who is righteous has many adversities, but the LORD rescues him from them all. ²⁰He protects all his bones; not one of them is broken. ²¹Evil brings death to the wicked and those who hate the righteous will be punished. ²²The LORD redeems the life of his servants, and all who take refuge in him will not be punished.

Commentary:

- Several assurances are given to the righteous and are contrasted with warnings given to those who do evil. First, the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, a sign of protection, but He is against the wicked and will remove their memory from the living. Second, the LORD hears the prayers of the righteous who are broken in spirit. Third, The LORD . . . delivers the righteous from their adversaries, but those who hate the righteous will be punished.

- Vs.18 Part of what draws us to the psalms is that it doesn't minimize the darkness, the emptiness, and the long nights of despair that most of us experience, yet against all this, the Psalms faithfully brings to our remembrance that God is not only present, but near to us when we are broken and crushed. John Calvin described the Psalms as *"an anatomy of all parts of the soul for there is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror."*¹⁴
- Although Psalm 34 is not considered a Messianic Psalm, Psalm 34:20 is prophetic of the Messiah. The Prophecy found in Psalm 34:20 has a strong link to the Book of Exodus and the Gospel of John.¹⁵ Looking back at Exodus 12:46 we see that no bone of the Passover lamb (a type of Christ) was to be broken. Looking ahead to John's Gospel we see that Christ, the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36) fulfilled Psalm 34:20 at the cross. John 19:33, 36 ***When they came to Jesus, they did not break his legs since they saw that he was already dead... For these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: Not one of his bones will be broken.***
- In summary, the psalmist asserted that the LORD redeems His servants; no one who trusts in Him will be lost. That this verse represents a summary of the reason for praise can be seen by the arrangement in the Hebrew text. This psalm is an acrostic: each verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order, but one letter in the Hebrew alphabet is omitted, thereby finishing the acrostic with verse 21.¹⁶ The last verse, then, breaks the sequence and calls attention to the message of redemption.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** Contrast the LORD's response towards the righteous and unrighteous in verses 15-21.
2. **Get it:** What promise is given in verse 22? (*see Romans 8:1*)
3. **Apply it:** Can you recall a time when you felt the nearness of God in a time of despair?

Apply: *Use this section to conclude your lesson for today.*

There are many applications that we can make from Psalm 34, but since verse 22 was written in such a way as to make it stand out from the rest of the Psalm, its message is significant. The message of the verse is one of redemption. Those who worship the LORD and put their trust in him will be redeemed and not be found guilty. Is Psalm 34:22 a reflection of your spiritual standing with the Lord?

April 28 – God Who Establishes Kingdoms

Text: Psalm 21

Big Idea: God established David's kingdom through victories accomplished by His might. David sets an example of praising the Lord for victories.

Focus: Use this section to open in a large group or small group setting.

Option 1: What did you learn about God in your reading this week?

Option 2: What is an example of a personal victory in your life which God deserves credit for?

Option 3: What do you consider one of your greatest accomplishments?

Study: Use this section for your small group Bible study time.

God Brings Victory

Read Psalm 21:1-7 and discuss the questions below.

For the Choir director. A Psalm of David.

¹ **LORD, the king finds joy in your strength.**

How greatly he rejoices in your victory!

² **You have given him his heart's desire**

and have not denied the request of his lips.

Selah

³ **For you meet him with rich blessings; you place a crown of pure gold on his head.**

⁴ **He asked you for life, and you gave it to him—length of days forever and ever.**

⁵ **His glory is great through your victory; you confer majesty and splendor on him.**

⁶ **You give him blessings forever; you cheer him with joy in your presence.**

⁷ **For the king relies on the LORD; through the faithful love of the Most High he is not shaken.**

Commentary:

- Notice the subtext before verse 1 which claims this as a psalm of David. Most likely, he wrote this during his time as king, and it was probably used after victory in battle.
- This Psalm is probably closely related to Psalm 20, which is a prayer for God to bring victory in battle. This Psalm, then, is likely the song they sung after God brought the victory which they had prayed for in Psalm 20. Notice the similarities in the early verses. In verse 2a, the psalmist rejoices at God giving the king the desires of his heart, which was specifically asked for in Psalm 20:4. In verse 2b, the psalmist writes that the Lord did not deny the request of his lips, which was also specifically asked for in Psalm 20:5. It is important to recognize when God answers our prayers and respond in gratitude, like David shows us in this Psalm.¹
- In verse 3, the psalmist mentions the Lord placing a crown of pure gold on his head. This is coronation language, even though it is meant to be a victory song. However, the victory in battle is being credited here to the Lord. So then, for David, this victory was likely affirmation of his kingship. David knows with certainty that he is the Lord's anointed since God has blessed him with success in battle.²

- In verse 4, the psalmist says the Lord gave the king length of days forever and ever. This ought to recall to our mind the Davidic covenant,³ in which God promised David an eternal throne for his descendants. This was ultimately fulfilled by Jesus Christ, who is of the lineage of David and is the promised Messianic King of Israel.
- Notice in verse 7 that trust for victory in the battle is to be placed in the Lord and His faithful love. The Hebrew word there is “Hesed.”⁴ It is often used in the Old Testament for a strong covenant-like love which is often expressed as God’s love for His people. Because King David knows God loves Him, he trusts Him with every battle. This is a good lesson for us to remember. If King David could trust God with the outcomes of literal and violent battles, then surely, we can trust Him with the struggles we face in our own lives!

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** When would this Psalm have been used by the Israelites?
2. **Apply it:** Have you ever felt the Lord affirm you in something He called you to?
3. **Apply it:** Have you ever had to trust the Lord with the outcome of a difficult situation? How did that go?

God Defeats Our Enemies

Read Psalm 21:8-12 and discuss the questions below.

⁸ *Your hand will capture all your enemies; your right hand will seize those who hate you.*

⁹ *You will make them burn like a fiery furnace when you appear;*

the LORD will engulf them in his wrath, and fire will devour them.

¹⁰ *You will wipe their progeny from the earth and their offspring from the human race.’*

¹¹ *Though they intend to harm you and devise a wicked plan, they will not prevail.*

¹² *Instead, you will put them to flight when you ready your bowstrings to shoot at them.*

Commentary:

- The tense shifts in this section from past to future tense. Part of the praise in this psalm is now related to future victories which the king trusts the Lord to provide. Just as the king has described the Lord’s triumphs in the previous battles, he now describes the future victories to his Lord.⁵
- The “fiery furnace” referred to here is probably the kind of furnace used to bake bricks and smelt metals. So, picture a large oven with doors on the side—likely similar to what we see Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego thrown into in Daniel 3.⁶
- Notice the burning fire imagery in verse 9. Many scholars see this as a messianic prophecy which will be fulfilled at Christ’s second coming. After all, this same fire imagery is used in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 to speak of the judgement of Christ upon His return.⁷
- If these verses are indeed messianic, then verse 11 ought to recall the crucifixion of Christ. After all, it was certainly a “wicked plan” intended to kill Christ. Yet, He was resurrected, thereby thwarting the plans of His enemies. Praise the Lord we serve a God who can be killed and yet not defeated.
- It is amazing to see how confident the psalmist is regarding future victories. Notice these confident boasts about the Lord’s enemies come only after the past victories are remembered. It is always easier for us to trust the Lord with the future by remembering how He has been faithful in the past.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** What is the focus of this section?
2. **Apply it:** Do you find it difficult to have this kind of confidence in the future? Why or why not?

God is Exalted for His Strength

Read Psalm 21:13 and discuss the questions below.

*¹³ Be exalted, LORD, in your strength;
we will sing and praise your might.*

Commentary:

- This verse provides a nice bookend with the beginning of the psalm because of the repeated phrase “your strength.” The psalmist knows the victory is only because of God’s strength, not the king himself or even his army. So then, the king remembers to give credit to where it is due—God’s strength.
- When the Lord delivers victory and He is properly exalted for it, it will naturally result in singing and making music to praise Him.⁸ The Israelites when they sang this of course, are doing exactly that, praising God for His victory.
- To exalt something is by definition to “raise it up.” The idea carries a sense of height, so as to be seen by others. To praise the Lord is to tell of Him that others might know Him. Remember, as we seek to exalt the Lord, it should naturally result in evangelism. We ought not to only proclaim the Lord’s faithfulness to an empty room, but to the world, that they might have a relationship with the Lord we worship.

QUESTIONS:

1. **Get it:** What does exalting the Lord naturally produce?
2. **Apply it:** What are some ways we can exalt the Lord this week in our personal lives?
3. **Apply it:** What are some ways we can exalt the Lord corporately?

Apply: *Use this section to conclude your lesson for today.*

This victory psalm was likely a part of Israel’s regular worship habits. It is important for us as God’s people to build regular rhythms of praising God for His victories in our lives and in His church. Do you have a regular rhythm of personal thanksgiving to God for the victories He provides? If not, make time this week to create that habit and exalt the Lord.

End Notes

Table of Contents

1. Cobble, Terry-Leigh. *Discussion Guide: The Bible Recap Weekly questions for Group Conversations on the Entire Bible*. Bethany House Publishers: Minneapolis, 2022, 12.

About this Unit

1. Arthur, Kay. *Covenant: God's Enduring Promises*, Chattanooga: Lifeway Press, 2009, 11.
2. Arthur, 11.
3. Baker, Warren and Eugene Carpenter. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*. AMG Publishers: Chattanooga, 2003, 165.
4. Berger, Brett. "Theology Thursday: What are the Biblical Covenants?" Grand Canyon University. <https://www.gcu.edu/blog/theology-ministry/theology-thursday-what-are-biblical-covenants>. 12/9/2019.
5. Berger.
6. Berger.

Maps and Charts

1. *The International Inductive Study Bible: New American Standard*. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1993, IISB-42.
2. "Numbers 33: Wilderness travels reviewed." Word Press, <https://truthsnitch.com/the-holy-bible-tiffsnotes/numbers/chapter-33/>, visited 1/23/2024.
3. "The Tribal Allotments of Israel." Knowing the Bible LLC, <https://www.knowingthebible.net/bible-maps>, 2004-2024.

How Reliable is the Old Testament?

1. McDowell, Josh. *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. Nashville: Tommy Nelson Publishers, 1999, 69.
2. McDowell, 74.
3. McDowell, 77-78.
4. McDowell, 69.
5. McDowell, 91.
6. McDowell, 93-94.
7. McDowell, 95.
8. McDowell, 69.
9. McDowell, 91
10. McDowell, 104-105.
11. McDowell, 105.
12. McDowell, 105-111.

March 3 – God who is Faithful

1. Ronald B. Allen, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, 1990, 2, 817.
2. R. Dennis Cole, *Numbers*, The New American Commentary, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 3B:228.
3. Allen, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, 1990, 2, 817.
4. Allen, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 817–18.
5. Cole, *Numbers*, 230.
6. Cole, *Numbers*, 232.
7. Cole, *Numbers*, 230.
8. Allen, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 819.
9. James Philip and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Numbers*, The Preacher's Commentary Series, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1987), 4:149.

March 10 – God who is Sovereign

1. Libby Ballard, "Balaam, Son of Beor," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).
2. Eugene H. Merrill, "Numbers," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 241.
3. Eugene H. Merrill, 242.
4. Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Nu 22:28–30.
5. Martin Pakula, *Numbers: Homeward Bound*, ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2006), 107.
6. Martin Pakula, 109.
7. Martin Pakula, 109.
8. Eugene H. Merrill, 243.

March 17 – God who is Jealous

1. Mackie, Tim and Jon Collins. "What's the Point of Deuteronomy?" Produced by Cooper Peltz. *Bible Project*, October 2022. Podcast, audio, 62:14. <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/whats-point-deuteronomy/>.
2. Mackie.
3. Wiersbe, Warren. *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament Pentateuch: Genesis-Deuteronomy*, Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2001, p.383.
4. Wiersbe, 383.
5. "Why is God a jealous God?" Got Questions Ministries, 2022. <https://www.gotquestions.org/jealous-god.html>.
6. *ESV Study Bible*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2008, p.338.
7. *ESV Study Bible*, 338

March 24 – God who Exposes Sin

1. Merrill F. Unger and Cyril Barber, *New Ungers Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 2006).
2. Unger and Barber, *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 716.
3. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Strong*. "Be" Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996). [Logos, no page #]
4. Wiersbe, *Be Strong*.
5. Richard S. Hess 2015. "Joshua" in *Holman Illustrated Bible Commentary*, (Broadman & Holman, 2015).
6. Wiersbe, *Be Strong*.
7. Wiersbe, *Be Strong*.
8. Matthew Henry and Thomas Scott, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*. (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997). [Logos, no page #]
9. Wiersbe, *Be Strong*.
10. "The Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts," Hymnary.org, accessed January 21, 2024, <https://hymnary.org/hymn/PHW/Ps.119#:~:text=While%20guilt%20disturbs%20and%20breaks,make%20my%20broken%20bones%20rejoice>.

March 31 – God who Rescues

1. *CSB Student Study Bible*. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2021, 332-333.
2. *CSB Student Study Bible*, 292.
3. Wiersbe, Warren. *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament History*. Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2003, 94.
4. Ryrie, Charles. *The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1977, 364.
5. Wilkin, Jen. *Judges: Forgetful People, Faithful God*. Flower Mound: Wilkin, 2015, 3.
6. Guzik, David. *Judges 4 – Deborah and Barak*. *The Enduring Word Bible Commentary*, 2022. <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/judges%204/>
7. Wiersbe, 107.
8. Guzik.
9. Wiersbe, 107.
10. Guzik.
11. Wiersbe 108.
12. Guzik
13. Wiersbe, 108.
14. "Israel in Canaan: Deborah the Judge." <https://www.ldolphin.org/deborahmap.jpg>. Visited 1/9/2024.
15. Wiersbe, 109.
16. Wiersbe, 110.
17. Wiersbe, 110.

April 7 – God who Chooses

1. “Strong’s H3378 – yrubaal.” Blue Letter Bible, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h3378/csb/wlc/0-1/>, 2024.
2. Wolf, Herbert. “Judges.” In *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, edited by Frank E. Gaebelein. Vol. 3. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.
3. Webb, Barry G. “Judges.” In *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, edited by D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, and G. J. Wenham, 261–286. 4th ed. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994.

April 14 – God who Calls us by Name

1. NIV Study Bible: New International Version. Edited by Kenneth Baker, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985, 371.
2. Wiersbe, Warren. *The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament History*. Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries, 2003, 206-207.
3. Ryrie, Charles. *The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1977, 409.
4. *CSB Student Study Bible*. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2021, 333.
5. Wilkin, Jen, et al. *1 Samuel: A King Unlike the Nations*. Flower Mound: The Village Church, 2018, 9.
6. Wiersbe, 207.
7. Wiersbe, 207.
8. Wiersbe, 207.
9. Guzik, David. 1 Samuel 3 – God Speaks to Samuel. *The Enduring Word Bible Commentary*, 2022. <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-samuel-3/>
10. Guzik.
11. Guzik.
12. Wiersbe, 215.
13. Wiersbe, 215.
14. Guzik.
15. Wiersbe, 215-216.
16. Guzik.
17. Guzik.

April 21 – God who is Worthy of Worship

1. The New Open Bible Study Edition, Nashville, TN, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, 621.
2. Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Chad Brand, gen. ed., Nashville, TN, Holman Reference, 2015, 1313.
3. Holman, 1314.
4. The New Open Bible Study Edition, 621.
5. Holman, 1314.
6. Holman, 1314.
7. Steven J. Cole, Psalm 34: Enjoying God and His Blessings, 2009, www.bible.org.
8. David Guzik, Psalm 34 – Praise from the Cave, 2020, www.enduringword.com.
9. Bible.org.
10. Allen P. Ross, Bible Knowledge Commentary of the O.T., John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, ed., Victor Books, 1988, 819.
11. Ross, 819.
12. Ross, 819.
13. Ross, 820.
14. Charles Swindoll, Book of Psalms Overview, Insight for Living Ministries, 2009, www.insight.org.
15. Brian Reynolds, Messianic Psalms – Psalm 34, 2021, www.patternsoftruth.org.
16. Ross, 820.

April 28 – God who Establishes Kingdoms

1. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, 1st ed., “Be” Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 87.
2. Wiersbe, 88.
3. Wiersbe, 88.
4. Allen P. Ross, “Psalms,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 809.
5. J. A. Motyer, “The Psalms,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 499.
6. Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Ps 21:9.
7. J. Josh Smith and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Psalms 1–50*, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2022), 155.
8. Moyter, 499.