

THE TRAIL OF GOD'S GRACE



Fellowship Bible Church

THE TRAIL OF GOD'S GRACE

Bible Study Guide

From the leadership development ministry of

FELLOWSHIP BIBLE CHURCH MISSIONS

Acknowledgments

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
UNIT ONE GOD AND HIS CREATION	3
Chapter 1 Who is God?	3
Chapter 2 God and His Creation	6
Chapter 3 God's Creation Becomes Cursed	9
 UNIT TWO MAN AND HIS SIN	 11
Chapter 4 Cain and Abel	11
Chapter 5 Noah and the Great Flood	14
Chapter 6 The Tower of Babel	17
 UNIT THREE GOD CHOOSES A FRIEND	 19
Chapter 7 God Calls Abram	19
Chapter 8 God Visits Abram	21
Chapter 9 Abraham's Faith is Tested	23
 UNIT FOUR GOD CHOOSES JACOB	 25
Chapter 10 Isaac's Twin Sons	25
Chapter 11 Jacob's Dream	27
Chapter 12 Joseph is Sold into Slavery	29
 UNIT FIVE GOD'S PEOPLE IN EGYPT	 31
Chapter 13 God Cares for His People In Egypt	31
Chapter 14 God Sends a Deliverer	33
Chapter 15 God Delivers His People	35
 UNIT SIX GOD LEADS HIS PEOPLE	 37
Chapter 16 God Destroys the Egyptian Army	37
Chapter 17 God's 10 Commandments	39
Chapter 18 Israel Fails to Trust God	41
Chapter 19 God Fulfills His Promise to Abraham	43
Chapter 20 God Prepares to Come and Save Us	45

UNIT SEVEN	THE SAVIOR COMES!	47
Chapter 21	Jesus is Born	47
Chapter 22	Jesus' Baptism	50
Chapter 23	Jesus' Temptation	52
Chapter 24	Jesus, The Only Way	54
Chapter 25	Who is Jesus to You?	56
Chapter 26	Jesus' Power Over Death	58
Chapter 27	King Jesus	60
Chapter 28	The Last Supper and Arrest of Jesus	62
Chapter 29	The Crucifixion and Burial of Jesus	65
Chapter 30	The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus	67
 UNIT EIGHT	 WHAT GOD WANTS HIS CHILD TO KNOW...	 70
Chapter 31	Now That you are God's Child	70
Chapter 32	God Wants You to Know Him	73
Chapter 33	God Wants You to Know Who You are in Christ	76

Unit 1 God and His Creation

Chapter 1 Who is God?

Introducing the Bible



2 Timothy 3:16 AMP “Every scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and is profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God’s will in thought, purpose and action).”

Did you know that the Bible is the most important book in the world? God spoke to men called prophets. Sometimes He spoke to them directly, sometimes He spoke to them through visions and sometimes He put the words right into their mind. These men, through faith and obedience toward God, carefully wrote the exact words God wanted us to someday read. 2 Peter 1:21 reveals that no prophecy (word from God) ever came because a man just thought it up, but men spoke what the Holy Spirit told them to. God’s book is a special letter from God to each one of us. God wants us to know and trust Him and He also wants us to know that He loves us. He desires us to be a part of His family and to live with Him forever as His child. Who is this God that loves us enough to want to speak to us? Can we know Him like we would know a friend? Let’s listen to what the Bible says about God so that we can get to know him.

Who is God? What is He like? Does He care about me?

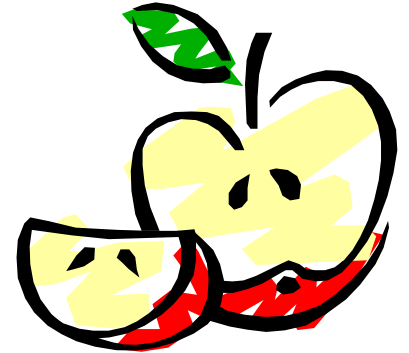
Genesis 1:1 says, *“In the beginning God...”*. Before there was an earth, planets, sun, moon, stars, angels or even people, there was only God. It is hard for us to understand this, but God has always lived. There has never been a time that God didn’t exist! We had a beginning, so we wrongly think that even God must have had a beginning. God has always been alive. He has no end. He is forever and ever.

There are many things that God wants us to know about Him and His wonderful plan for us all, but we are not able to understand. Sometimes His truth doesn’t make sense at all to us, but He wants us to trust Him and believe what He tells us. Trusting God enough to believe what He tells us is what the Bible calls “faith”. Faith is believing what God tells us in the Bible even when we have no proof that it is true except that God says so (Heb.11: 1). Faith is the only thing that pleases God (Heb. 11:6). It does not matter how many good

things we do if we don't believe God is telling the truth, then we are not pleasing Him. We all like to have people trust us and believe what we say. Suppose your friend never believed anything you said, but he still wanted to interact with you. You would start to think that he really didn't like or trust you but was using you for some selfish purpose. Sometimes people do that with God, they want to go to church and have God answer their prayers, but they really don't trust in Him. All that God wants from us is for us to know, love and trust Him.

He is looking throughout the whole world for someone who will believe what He says (2 Chron. 16:9). Will you be that person who will trust God enough to believe what He says in His Word?

What is God like? There are many verses in the Bible that describe God to us. We learn that God is "One God" (1 Cor. 8:6), but yet He is 3 persons. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This is called the Trinity. We don't understand how there can be 3 distinct persons, yet be only one God, but God says that it is true. Look at an apple, it is a trinity. It has a peel, flesh, and core. If you were to take a knife and carefully separate the peel from the flesh and then the flesh from the core and put them in three separate piles how many apples would you have? Right, you would still have only one apple. Is the apple peel still apple? Is the apple core still apple or has it become a pear or an orange?



God will teach us more about the "Trinity" as we study the Bible with Him.

Here are some more facts about God from the Bible:

✚ **God is a Spirit (John 4:24).** We can not see Him, but He is still there. Just as we can't see the wind, but we know the wind is there by watching the leaves on the trees or grass move. We may not be able to see God, but we can surely see the world He has made.

✚ **God is unchangeable and timeless.** He is not controlled by time or space like we are (Heb. 13:8). No matter how hard we try we can not slow time down or go back in time. We may want to stay young or make a vacation last longer, but we can't. Time does not change God like it does us (Malachi 3:6). If He loves you today you can count on Him to love you tomorrow. There is nothing you can do tomorrow that will take God by surprise or cause Him to be sorry He ever loved you.

✚ **God is all-powerful.** He can do anything except lie or fail (Heb. 6:18). There is no one who can defeat God or prevent what He has purposed from coming to pass!

✚ **God knows everything.** There is nothing that God does not know. He knows what we are thinking and even knows what we are going to say before we do (Ps. 139:4)!

✚ **God is both good and just.** Although sin angers God, He is always ready to forgive us when we ask him to (1 John 1:9). He is also holy and just (Lev. 11:44). That means that He can not let sin go unpunished. God would not be good if He let people get away with the bad things they do. How could God remain good if He never punished evil? Sometimes it looks like people are getting away with their sin, but God is only being good to them, giving them a chance to change their mind about their sin and come to Him for forgiveness (2 Peter 3:9). Since sin must be paid for, God made a way for us to be forgiven. He sent His own Son to die in our place.

Additional Study Verses:

ETERNAL EXISTENCE

- ❑ Psalm 90:2
- ❑ Hebrews 1:10-12

FAITHFULNESS

- ❑ Lamentations 3:23
- ❑ Deuteronomy 7:9

GOODNESS

- ❑ Exodus 34:6
- ❑ Psalm 31:19

GRACE

- ❑ 1 Corinthians 1:4
- ❑ Titus 2:11-13
- ❑ Hebrews 4:16

MERCY

- ❑ Ephesians 2:4-7
- ❑ Isaiah 55:6,7

Chapter 2 God and His Creation

God Creates the Angels

We are not told when, but before God created the universe, He created spirit beings, called angels, to inhabit His home in heaven. He made many different angels, but all having the same purpose to love and serve God. Some are described as many as many as 6 wings (Isaiah 6:2), while others are just beautiful to look at. One angel in particular was extremely beautiful and had an angelic form that made music (Ezek. 28:13)! God named him Lucifer. Lucifer was created to bring glory to God and to lead others in the worship of God, but one day he began to resent his job and wanted to have the other angels admire him rather than God (Isaiah 14:12-15). He hatched up a plan to someday take God's place in their affection. We don't know very much about it but according to Revelation 12 there was war in heaven and this angel caused 1/3 of God's angels to turn against God and follow him. The angels that followed Lucifer are called demons. God changed Lucifer's name to Satan, which means enemy. Lucifer was no longer an angel of light, now he is an enemy of God. Satan and his angels were thrown out of God's presence. They were never sorry for what they did. Even now they are looking for every chance they can to cause God pain. They know that someday God will judge them for what they have done and has already created a place called the lake of fire in which they will be cast forever (Rev. 20:10; Matt. 25:41).

God Creates the Heaven and the Earth (Genesis 1:1-25)



Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth". The word created means to make something out of nothing. God spoke and things appeared. When He said, "Light be", light immediately appeared. The same thing happened as He created the planets, the stars, the seas, the land and all the plant and animal life. After each creation He said that it was good. Everything that God created was perfect. There was no pain, suffering or death. The animals lived in peace with each other.

God Creates Man (Genesis 1:26-2:25)

God was very pleased with all his creation, but there was no one who could enjoy His beautiful world with Him. (God knew what He was going to do. Remember He knows all things.) He had a plan; He would create a wonderful place and make a being that was very different from the angels. These beings would be created in His image and they would become His family. They would love Him as Father and He would call them children. This being was not created like the animals. Instead of speaking him into existence, God took a handful of dust and formed a man out of it. Then He breathed on the dust and life came into the dust.

God created the first man. He named him Adam. Adam was perfect and innocent. That means that he was never cross or selfish. He was trusting. Adam was also very smart; he named all the animals that God created (Gen. 2:19,20)! He didn't just remember what



God called them, he thought up new names for each one. Try to think up new names for each of the items you can see in your room and then remember them. What a job! Soon Adam noticed that he was alone. The animals all had mates but he didn't. God caused Adam to fall asleep (Gen. 2:21). While he was asleep, God removed one of his ribs and created a woman out of it. She was a perfect companion for Adam. When Adam woke up, God brought her to him. Adam loved her. Their life was wonderful. They had no need to fear anything.

All was well.

God wanted people to love and trust Him because they wanted to, not because they had no other choice. In the middle of the garden, God planted a tree; the tree was called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God told Adam that he could freely eat of every tree in the garden except this one. "In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die", warned God. Every evening, God would come to visit them and walk throughout the garden with them. Life was great.

Additional Study Verses:

ANGELS

- ❑ Matthew 4:11
- ❑ Hebrews 13:2
- ❑ Hebrews 1:1-4

CREATION

- ❑ Colossians 1:16-17
- ❑ John 1:3

Chapter 3 God's Creation Becomes Cursed (Genesis 3: 1-24)

It didn't take long for Satan to show up. The Bible tells us in Genesis 3:1-6 that one day while Adam's wife, Eve was in the middle of the garden she met an interesting creature the Bible calls a serpent (this serpent could talk). He was quite attractive and pleasant. He struck up a conversation with Eve; he asked, "Did God say you shall not eat of every tree in the garden?"

Eve answered, "We may eat of all the trees of this garden, but we are not to eat or touch the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden. If we do we will die!"

"You won't die! God told you that because He knows that if you eat of it you will become like Him", he hissed back at her! Then he must have picked a fruit and ate it, showing her that it was safe to eat because the Bible says that she saw that the fruit was pleasant to look at and that it was good to eat. She watched the creature eat and nothing happened! Maybe God was lying like the serpent said, she probably thought. For the first time in Eve's life she began to doubt God. She forgot how good God was to her and Adam. She took the fruit and ate it. Nothing happened so she took it to Adam and he ate it too. Suddenly their eyes were opened and they became afraid. Sin had entered their hearts and now things would never be the same. They realized that they were naked and they tried to make clothes out of leaves. They were afraid of God and they tried to hide from Him.



As they were hiding in the garden, God came to them just as He always did. He called out to them, but they didn't answer Him. God's promise was coming true. He said that in the day that they ate they would die. They had died on the inside. God had created man in His image. God is a spirit, so God gave man a spirit like His so that we could know and love Him. Their spirit died, or became separated from God, when they disobeyed and their

bodies began to grow older. Death had come to stay just as God had warned them. They no longer thought like or trusted God. When we do wrong we feel guilty and we try to hide

our wrong action by lying or blaming it on someone else. We are afraid of punishment or worse we are afraid that people won't like us anymore. All of these terrible feelings came from our first parents, Adam and Eve.

Finally God came to Adam and asked him why he did not come when God called. (Remember we can't hide anything from God. God knew that Adam and Eve would choose to disobey Him long before He created them.) Why did God ask them, if He already knew what had happened? He wanted Adam and Eve to understand what had happened. He wanted them to come to Him even if they sinned. God loved them so much. You would think He would be so angry that He would give up on them and start all over with new people, but He didn't.

God asked Adam and Eve some hard questions in Gen. 3: 11. "Have you eaten of the tree in the middle of the garden that I told you not to eat of?" Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent (who was really Satan disguised as a serpent if you haven't guessed that by now). God cursed Satan. Since Satan had tricked Eve into eating the fruit, God would use the woman to someday bring a redeemer (a redeemer is someone who is willing to pay the price to free someone from slavery) into the world. Who although Satan would bruise His heel, the seed of the woman (the Redeemer) would crush Satan's head. Satan's days were numbered. Satan knew that when the Redeemer would come he would be done for. As we study God's story we will see how Satan will try to stop the Redeemer from coming, and how God's word will not fail to come to pass.

Satan still deceives people today. He tells us that our parents and teachers don't know what they are talking about. He will tell us that we won't get caught if we do wrong. He will try to make us think that God can't be trusted. It is his plan to prevent people from trusting God and believing His word.

It was a sad day for Adam and Eve. They could not stay in the garden that they called home. Their homemade clothes were not able to hide their shame and sin. God took innocent animals and put them to death in Adam and Eve's place and made clothes out of their skins. Death with all its suffering and fear came into God's beautiful world that day. Life was no longer easy. They had to work hard to feed themselves (Genesis 3:17-19). After clothing them,



God made them leave the Garden of Eden. There was a tree in the garden that was called the Tree of Life, if they ate of it in their sinful condition, they would live forever in their fallen

state. Imagine suffering forever with sin, sickness and sorrow. Because God is good, He did not want that to happen to them, so to make sure they did not come back, He placed Cherubim angels and a flaming sword at the gate. (Genesis 3:22-24).

Additional Study Verses:

TEMPTATION

- ❑ I Corinthians 10:12-13
- ❑ Matthew 4:1-1

Unit 2 Man and His Sin

Chapter 4 Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-24)

Life outside the garden was difficult for Adam and Eve. They found out what it was like to feel sickness and pain. Thorns and weeds began to sprout, crowding their vegetable and fruit plants. I'm sure they wished they never ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Satan had lied to them, and they foolishly believed him. It was impossible for them to go back and fix the wrong they had done. Even though their sin brought fear and suffering into their lives, God had not forgotten to show mercy to Adam and Eve.



(Remember God loved them). Eve had two sons; their names were Cain and Abel. Eve never forgot what God had promised her on that terrible day back in the garden. God had promised that one of her children would someday crush the head of Satan and rescue the rest of Adam and Eve's children from sin and its awful result. As she watched her little boys grow up, she probably wondered if one of them could be the one promised by God. As they

grew up their father, Adam taught them about God and showed them how to offer sacrifices and worship God.

Years later the boys became men, Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain was a gardener. When the time came for them to sacrifice an innocent animal to "cover" their sin so that God could continue to bless them, Abel brought a lamb and offered it to God (Gen. 4:4). The Bible tells us that God had respect for, Abel's sacrifice. Abel's faith in what his father taught him about worshipping God pleased God and God let him know it. Cain decided that he wanted to please God in another way. He ignored what his father taught him and put fruit and vegetables on the altar. God was not pleased with Cain. He gave Cain a chance to do what was right, but Cain only became angry and refused to listen to God. Instead of being sorry for his sin he became angry with Abel. The more he thought about it the angrier he became. Finally he could not stand the sight of his only brother and when he met Abel out in a lonely field, he killed him! Cain must have been so afraid when he realized that Abel was



dead. He had never seen a person die before. He probably thought, "What if my parents find out"? Or worse, what if God knows what I have done? He pretended as though nothing had happened, but we know that God knows everything.

God began to question Cain. God asked, "Cain, where is your brother, Abel?" "How should I know," barked back Cain, "am I my brother's guardian?" "What have you done? I hear your brother's blood (life) crying out to me from the ground," shouted God at Cain! Cain knew he had been found out.

The Bible tells us that we can be sure our sin will find us out (Numbers 32:23). We may think we are getting away with the wrong that we do, but it is only a matter of time before God will make us face up to our sin. Cain's sin resulted in more trouble for Cain. He was no longer to live with his mother and father, he was sent to live alone in the wilderness away from everything he was familiar with. The ground also was cursed again, it would be even harder to grow food because of Cain's sin. Cain was so scared, he was afraid that as people began to increase, someone would hunt him down and kill him for what he had done to Abel. Sin does that to us, first it lies to us telling us that we will get away with our sin, then when we finally sin it makes us afraid we will get caught and be punished. God made a promise to Cain, he would see to it that everyone knew that if they killed Cain for what he did, God would punish them 7 times worse! Then He put a mark on Cain so that anyone who found him would know that God was protecting Cain.

Cain's sin not only hurt him, it also hurt his parents. Eve lost both of her sons. She was very sad, but God is loving and merciful (merciful means that God is kind and does good to us although we deserve to be punished). He gave Eve and Adam another son. They named him Seth. Seth was a sinner like his parents, but he believed in God. His faith pleased God. The devil thought he had stopped God from bringing the Redeemer into the world when Cain killed obedient Abel, but God is much more powerful and wiser than a sneaky angel like Satan. God used Seth's family to bring the Promised Redeemer into the world. God planned it that way and no one, not even the devil could stop it from happening.

Additional Study Verses:

ANGER

- Proverbs 14:17

LOVE

- Mark 12:30-31

HUMILITY

- Philippians 2:5-8

Chapter 5 Noah and the Great Flood (Genesis 5:1-8:2)

There was a man called Noah. Noah was the great, great, great, (I forget how many greats) grandson of Seth. Seth had remembered to tell his children about God, and they told their children, so Noah's father told him about God and Noah believed. Noah's father prophesied (spoke God's will with authority) that Noah would be the one through whom the Promised One who would remove the curse from off the earth and comfort us would come (Gen. 5:29). Noah and his wife and three sons lived during a time when people no longer believed in God. They were very selfish and hateful with each other. Out of all the many people on the earth, no one hated sin and trusted God except Noah and his family. The Bible said that God was sorry He had made people (Gen. 6:6). God wanted them to change their mind about their sin and come to trust Him, but they wanted nothing to do with God. The people wanted to be left alone to sin more. Finally God said, enough. In 120 years God would destroy the world with a flood of water that would kill every living thing.

How could God flood the earth and not save Noah? He couldn't. Noah's faith in God caught God's attention and He planned a way of escape for Noah and for anyone else who would believe Noah's message about the flood. God told Noah to build an ark (an ark is a huge flat-bottomed boat) exactly the way God would tell him. It would have one door and only one tiny window. Noah and his sons may have spent 120 years building it! As they worked, people probably came and talked to them about what they were doing. The Bible said that Noah was a preacher of righteousness (righteousness is what a person is and does when they believe God), that means that he would tell anyone who would listen that God was going to destroy the world with a great flood (2 Peter 2:5). I am sure the people laughed and made fun of Noah. Who ever heard of water falling from the sky? Up until this time rain had never fallen from the sky (Gen. 2:5). The weather must have been very much like living in a green house. After sunny days, heavy dew came up out of the ground and watered the earth (Gen. 2:6)! It was silly to think that water could fall from the sky. Poor Noah! No one

but his family believed that God had warned him about the flood. By faith Noah and his sons built and finished the ark.

One week before the flood, God brought animals to Noah, (so that there would be animals after the flood was over to inhabit the earth). Noah took a pair of each unclean animals (animals that can't be eaten or sacrificed to God) and seven each of clean animals (animals that could be eaten or sacrificed) on board the ark. Finally God called them to come into the ark;



Noah, his wife, three sons and their wives went in. As they stood inside the big wooden ship they watched as the door closed behind them. God, Himself shut the door (Gen. 7:16). It was too late for anyone to change their mind about joining Noah in the ark. Only 8 people, out of perhaps billions of people, trusted God enough to believe that a great flood was about to come. When Noah was safely shut in the ark, it began to rain and the ground began to quake and break open as gigantic fountains of water gushed up toward the sky (Gen. 7:11).

Before anyone even realized what was happening, it was all over. Every one died that refused to get in the ark with Noah. The Bible says it rained and rained and rained for forty days and nights. Inside the ark, Noah's family and the animals were safe. God had kept His promise and they were safe from the storm.

Many months later, the ark landed on the top of a mountain. Noah and his family stayed inside the ark until God told them it was OK to come out. Finally they stepped out of the ark and looked around. How much the earth had changed, it looked so different to them

(it looked like it does today), but Noah and his family were grateful that God cared enough about them to save them from the flood. They began to worship God and offer a sacrifice to Him. God made a very special promise to Noah and his family. He promised that He would never again destroy the world with a flood ever again. As a sign to Noah and to us, God created a spectacular sign in the sky. He made a rainbow. Today you and



I can see rainbows whenever it rains at the same time the sun is shining! Remember it is God's special promise to you to care for you just as He cared for Noah, as you trust Him.

Note:

It very is clear God is not willing that anyone die and be separated from God forever because of their sin, but is patiently longing that all people would change their minds about sin and trust Him. (See Ezek. 33:11 and 2 Peter 3:9).

Additional Study Verses:

SIN

- ▣ 1 John 3:4

RESULTS OF SIN

- ▣ Mark 7:21-23

EXTENT OF SIN

- ▣ Romans 3:23

EXTENT OF GOD'S LOVE

- ▣ Romans 5:6-8

OUR ADVOCATE

- ▣ 1 John 2:1-2

Chapter 6 The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9)

No matter how many times people are given a new chance to please God, they always fail. We may really want to and try very hard, but sooner or later the sin and selfishness in our heart wins. You would think that after the flood, Noah's great, great, great grandchildren and their families would remember the terrible price of not trusting God, but they didn't. Noah's little family grew into a very large family many years after the flood. The people had begun to forget God and live their lives very selfishly. They were afraid that as more and more people were born that they would no longer want to all stay together so some of the men thought and thought on how to keep everybody together. They had a great idea on how to become more important in their own eyes and also keep people from wanting to leave. They would build a huge city with a tall tower that "reached to the heavens". "Then we will really be important," they thought! They made the same mistake Adam and Eve made, thinking that they could be great like God. After the flood God had told Noah's family to be fruitful and multiply (have large families) and fill the earth (travel all over the earth and settle there), but these men didn't want to obey God.



God knew that if they continued thinking like they did they would soon plunge the world into judgment again (Gen. 11:6,7). In those days, everyone spoke the same language. God had a plan, He would separate the people into smaller groups and they would not be as powerful. It would slow down the spread of sin and all the suffering it causes. Suddenly, without warning every person began to speak and understand a new language. They didn't have to go to

school to learn it, amazingly as they began to speak, they no longer spoke the language they were born with! Imagine waking up one morning and finding out you suddenly spoke a different language than everybody else! Picture the confusion! People were frantically searching for someone who would understand them. Finally all the people were separated into smaller groups. The people realized that they needed to separate from each other so they began to pack their belongings and each little group of people set out to find a new

place to live.

All their plans to be great and make a name for themselves fell apart! Every time someone tries to become like God in a way that dishonors God, it fails. Remember Satan, he wanted to become like God and take God's place and he failed. Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil because they wanted to become like God. They only succeeded in bringing pain and suffering into the world. Sin had dreadful results. No matter how many times people are punished for the wrong they do, their hearts are never changed. Not all the threats of punishment or rules in the world can not fix what is wrong with our hearts!

The sin that entered into Adam and Eve's hearts all those years ago is in every person's heart. We are hopeless to change ourselves. We may really want to change and try with all our strength to be good, but we can't. In time we will end up being selfish and hurting someone. We need a Savior, someone who is a human like us, yet who has never sinned, who will defeat Satan and sin and rescue us from the sin in our hearts.

God had not forgotten His promise to Eve. He was at work, behind the scenes working out His plan to rescue us from sin. One of the little groups of people that left the city of Babel that day was the family that God would bring the Redeemer into the world through. They were the members of Shem's family. Shem was one of Noah's sons. They eventually settled not far from Babel and built a city called Ur. As far as we know none of them knew or trusted God. God still had a plan to use this family, He would show grace (undeserved favor and kindness) to one of them. In the next unit we will meet this man who God chose.

Additional Study Verses:

PRIDE

- ❑ Luke 1:51-52
- ❑ Mark 7:21-23

EXAMPLE OF PRIDE

- ❑ Luke 18:9-14

Unit 3 God Chooses a Friend

Chapter 7 God Calls Abram (Genesis 11:29-31; 12:1-5)

Many years after the people left Babel, God chose a man who lived in Ur to be the father of the family He would bring the Savior into the world through. As far as anybody knows there wasn't one person on earth who cared about God or even believed in Him any more. Men worshipped false gods called idols, which really weren't gods, but only the works of men's hands. The devil probably thought he had outwitted God and that he had won the battle for the lives of men. Thankfully, for us God was not beaten by the devil, He had a plan and nothing would stop it from coming about.

In the city of Ur there lived a man named Abram. Abram was about 75 years old when God spoke to him. Abram was married to a beautiful woman named Sarai. They loved each other very much, but they had no children (Gen. 11:30). This made Sarai very unhappy. One day God made Himself known to Abraham and spoke to him. God said, "Leave your country and your friends and relatives and go to the land I will show you. I will make a great nation out of you. I will bless (do good to) you...And in you shall all the families of the earth (that includes your family and mine) be blessed" (Gen. 12:1-3).

Abram was overjoyed! God was real and He had spoken to him! When it all sunk in, Abram realized that he and Sarai even though they were old, would someday have a child just as God promised. They would have a family, and not only that, their family was chosen by God out of all the families in the world to bring the Savior into the world. Through Abram's family the whole world would be blessed. He told Sarai everything and she began to pack

everything they owned. Their friends and family probably didn't understand what they were doing. They may have asked questions like, "**Where** did you say God wants you to move to?"

Abram probably answered, "I don't know yet".

"What do you mean, you don't know yet", they asked?

"God didn't tell me where, He just told me to go and He would show me the way", Abram probably said. Imagine the fun that they



poked at Abram. It didn't matter how much they tried to discourage Abram, he believed what God told him and he was leaving.

Sarai and Abram said goodbye to their family and left their home behind. Traveling with them, were their nephew Lot and many servants. As they went, God told them where to go and they traveled southwest into the land of Canaan.

As they were traveling through the land, God spoke again to Abram. He said, "To your children I will give this land" (Gen.12:7). Abram was so glad he had believed God and acted on God's instructions. Near a beautiful oak tree he built an altar to the Lord and worshipped Him.

Because Abram believed God, God considered Abram to be a righteous man (Romans 4:3). That means, in God's eyes it was as though Abram had never sinned even though he had. When we take God at His word and not doubt what He says, we are pleasing Him. The Bible teaches, it is not the one who tries to earn God's approval and love through doing good things that is considered right in God's eyes, but the person who really and truly trusts God enough to believe what He has said in His word (Romans 4:4,5).

Additional Study Verses:

THE LORD'S CALL

- ❑ Matthew 4:18-20
- ❑ Mark 2:14

DOUBTING

- ❑ Matthew 14:29-31
- ❑ Mark 4:35-39

OBEDIENCE

- ❑ Psalm 25:8-11
- ❑ Luke 12:35-40

Chapter 8 God Visits Abram (Genesis 13, 18, 19)

Abram and his nephew, Lot, had many flocks and herds. God had blessed Abram and Abram became very rich. Soon there were so many animals between the two of them that Lot's servants and Abram's began to fight among themselves over the best pastures and watering places. Rather than see Lot and himself begin to fight with one another, Abram decided to let Lot choose where he would like to live and then Abram would go in the opposite direction. Although Lot loved his uncle, he was a very selfish person. He looked at the well-watered lush fields of the Jordan River valley and said, "I choose the valley of Jordan River!" Abram traveled back in the land of Canaan and settled there, while Lot moved into the beautiful valley and eventually bought a home in the wicked city of Sodom. The city of Sodom was full of violent and wicked people that did whatever they felt like although they knew it was wrong. Although Lot was bothered by the sin of the people who lived there, he still lived there with his family (2 Peter 2:7).

After Lot left, God spoke to Abram again. He told Abram to lift up his eyes and look north, south, east and west. Then God said, "I will give all this land to you and your children forever" (Gen. 13:14,15).



Years later while Abram was camped by the oaks of Mamre (Gen.18:1), God appeared to Abram in a very special way. Up until this time, Abram had only heard God's voice speak to him, but now God visited him in the form of a man. With God were two men who were really angels. Abram was so excited, he asked them to sit down and rest while he and his wife prepared food for them. God had many things to tell Abram. One of the things that God told Abram was that Sarai (who was

too old to have children) would have a baby that time next year! Sarai was listening from inside the tent and when she heard that she laughed (Gen. 18:12). She couldn't believe it. How could she have a baby at her age? Yet God was very clear, next year she would have a son of her own.

When it was time for God to leave, he told Abram something very sad. He told Abram that the sin of Sodom had become so bad that He would have to destroy the city. Abram's heart began to pound as he realized what that would mean for Lot. So he began to plead with God for the city. He asked God, "Will You destroy the righteous with the wicked?"

Suppose there are fifty people who believe in You in the city will you still destroy the city?"

So the Lord answered, "If there are 50 righteous people in the city, I will spare it."

Abram thought about that for a minute, what if he was wrong? What if there weren't 50 believers in Sodom. So He asked God again, "Suppose there are only 45 people? Will You still destroy the city?"

The Lord agreed with Abram, if there were only 45, He would not destroy the city. This went on for a few more times, each time Abram lowered the number of righteous people until finally it was only 10 people.

God promised that if 10 righteous people could be found in the city He would spare it for their sake. Abram was satisfied. He knew that Lot was a believer and surely there were at least 9 other people that believed in God in that big city. Sadly the angels of God could only find Lot and his family that believed in God. They took Lot and his family out of the city before the city was destroyed. God showed grace to Lot and rescued him even though he was living in a very sinful city.

Additional Study Verses:

INTERCESSORY PRAYER FOR:

- ❑ **ALL AUTHORITY** Timothy 2:1-3
- ❑ **ENEMIES** Luke 6:27-28
- ❑ **ALL SAINTS** Ephesians 6:18

Chapter 9 Abraham's Faith is Tested (Genesis 21:1-3; 22:1-18)

Not very long after God had visited Abram and Sarai, God again spoke to Abram. This time God did something very unusual, He changed Abram and Sarai's names! The Bible teaches that God has the power to bring to life someone who is dead and call things that are not as though they were (Romans 4:17). Sarai and Abram were very old and childless. All their neighbors and servants probably felt very sorry for them. In those days, it was very upsetting for a married woman to be childless. Many people thought a childless woman was cursed. As God spoke to Abram, He told Abram that he was no longer to be called Abram, but Abraham. Abraham means "Father of many nations". In addition, Sarai was to change her name to Sarah, which means "Princess" because she would become a mother of many nations! Only God can change someone's name and have them become what He has called them to be! (Remember in the very beginning of God's story, when God looked at the darkness and said, "Light be"?) Abraham rushed to tell Sarah all that God had said to him! They were so excited about God's promise to them that they would soon have a son. Their grandchildren would become many great nations.

Their faith in God grew as they waited for God's promise to happen. When Sarah wanted Abraham to come home for dinner, she would call out, "Abraham, Abraham (Father of many nations)". Everyone who heard her call Abraham probably thought she was a foolish old woman. "How silly", they thought, "how can he be the father of many nations?" When Abraham answered her, they really thought this old couple was crazy. He would say, "Coming, Sarah (Princess of many nations)!" They didn't care what people thought of them, they trusted God and could not wait until God visited Sarah and they had their baby boy.

Finally, one day, just as God had promised, Sarah had a baby boy. She named him Isaac, which means laughter, because Sarah laughed, when she overheard God tell Abraham she was going to have a baby. Isaac was their pride and joy. Everyone who knew them had to admit that it was a miracle because Sarah was 90 years old when he was born! They watched him grow and taught him all about the Lord. Isaac was a very obedient child. He loved his mother and father very much and he also believed in God.

As time went on, God decided to test Abraham's faith in Him. One day while Abraham was alone, God spoke to him again. He said, "Abraham, take your only son, the son that you love, and take him to Mount Moriah and offer him there to Me." Abraham probably struggled with the same questions and doubts that we struggle with. Why would God give me a son only to take him from me? Abraham trusted God. Scripture tells us that Abraham fully trusted in the goodness of God. According to Hebrews 11:17-19, Abraham expected God to raise Isaac from the dead if necessary. God can not lie. If Isaac did not live then God was a liar, since God promised to make a great nation out of Isaac. Although Abraham did not

understand why God was asking him to do this very hard thing, he decided that he would, once again, trust God. He knew that God always keeps His promises.

Then very early the next morning, Abraham and Isaac left home to worship God at Mount Moriah. Alone they walked up the mountain. They had wood for the fire, but no lamb for the sacrifice. Isaac was curious and asked Abraham where the sacrifice was. Abraham assured Isaac that God would supply a sacrifice. Abraham was fully convinced that God would deliver Isaac. After binding the trusting Isaac to the altar, Abraham raised the sharp knife.



He was just about to sacrifice Isaac when God called out, “Stop!” God had rescued Isaac just in time.

Abraham breathed a sigh of relief and listened to God very carefully. Nearby caught in the bushes by its horns, was a ram. God saved Isaac by providing a substitute to die in his place. Because of Abraham’s trust in God and his unquestioning obedience, God poured out on him a great blessing that effects us

today. God was giving mankind a picture of the great sacrifice He would someday make by sending His one and only Son to take our place just like the ram took Isaac’s place on the altar.

Additional Study Verses:

FAITH (defined)

- ❑ Hebrews 11
- ❑ Matthew 6:25-34
- ❑ II Corinthians 4:7-18

Unit 4 God Chooses Jacob

Chapter 10 Isaac's Twin Sons (Genesis 25:21-34)

Isaac, the only son of Abraham and Sarah, soon grew up. His father sent a trusted servant to their family in Mesopotamia in search of a wife for Isaac. In those days, parents often chose their children's mates for life. Isaac prayed for God's choice to be made. Soon one evening while Isaac was out walking and meditating, he saw in the distance the servant coming home. With him was a young woman named Rebekah who also trusted in God. Isaac fell in love with her the moment he saw her; they both loved each other very much. They married and began their life together. They wanted a child very badly. Year after year their prayers for a child went unanswered. Isaac remembered how long his parents waited until he was born and he reminded himself of God's promise to make great nations out of him. After 20 years of marriage God answered their prayers and Rebekah had twin boys! Esau and Jacob were as different as night and day. Esau was a red headed boy who loved to hunt and spend his entire time outdoors. He had little time for God. Jacob was different, he was content to spend time learning about his family and God. He kept sheep and cattle and was not as adventurous as his older brother.

Jacob understood the value of God's promise made to his grandfather Abraham. He believed that God would someday make a great nation out of his family through which the Deliverer would come. He listened intently when his parents talked of it. Esau didn't have time for what he probably considered "fairy tales". "Who wants to be responsible for the spiritual wellbeing of other people anyway? I'd rather be out in the fields hunting and having a good time", he probably thought.



Esau was born first so it was expected that he would receive the birthright and blessing of the family's spiritual leader. Jacob wished that he were the first born instead of Esau. One day while he was cooking some stew, his brother Esau came home from hunting. Esau was tired and hungry so he asked Jacob for some stew. "I'm starving to death, Jacob, give me something to eat". (*Now Esau was not really going to starve to death, but he was only exaggerating. He was*

very self-centered and could not stand to suffer for anything. Remember, he only wanted to have a good time and could care less about important things like God's plan for their family.) Jacob quickly thought up a plan of his own; he would sell his stew in exchange for Esau's birthright as firstborn son. Esau without thinking, agreed and for a bowl of stew he gave up his right as the firstborn son. Now Jacob would be the leader of the family when his father passed away.

Jacob didn't have to buy his brother's birthright because God had told Jacob and Esau's mother, Rebekah before the twins were born that the elder would serve the younger (Gen. 25:23). God had chosen Jacob to be the one through whom the Deliverer would come. Although God would make a mighty nation out of Esau, the Deliverer would not come from his family.

What is important in your life? Is having a good time with your friends of more value to you than learning more about God and His plan for your life? Don't be an Esau who didn't appreciate God's plan for his family. God has a wonderful plan for your life, He waits for you to trust Him to bring it about.

Additional Study Verses:

SEEKING GOD'S WILL

- ❑ Romans 12:1-2
- ❑ 2 Timothy 3:16,17

NATURAL MAN

- ❑ Galatians 5:19-21
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 2:14

Chapter 11 Jacob's Dream (Genesis 27-Genesis 28:10-15)



Jacob had really made a mess of his life. He deceived his blind father by pretending to be Esau and stole his twin brother's blessing. Now his brother, Esau was so angry with Jacob, he threatened to kill him. There was nothing left to do but leave home until his brother cooled off. His mother sent him to her family to live. That first night of travel was very lonely and Jacob was full of questions over the future. He had good reason to worry; he was now reaping the consequences of bad choices. He propped himself up against a stone and fell off to sleep. As he slept, he dreamed that a ladder or staircase suddenly appeared near his camp, it reached far into the night sky and angels were walking up and down it. Suddenly the LORD appeared at the top of the stair and He spoke to Jacob. He told Jacob that He was the God of his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham.

Then He promised to give Jacob the land that was promised to Abraham. Then He calmed Jacob's fears, promised to be with him in his journey, and would someday bring him back home safely. Jacob had many faults and certainly did not deserve God's grace (favor and kindness), yet God chose Jacob and worked in his life. He eventually brought Jacob home and even changed Esau's heart toward his brother. God always keeps His Word, no matter how long it takes or whose heart needs to be changed.

Have you ever done something and made someone you care about very angry with you? Sometimes they are so angry with us that they won't even accept our apology. Aren't you glad that God is never like that with us? No matter how many times we do wrong, if we will admit our wrong, God is ready to forgive us and to cleanse us of our wrongdoing (1 John 1:9). Jacob was very sorry he had tricked his father and stole his brother's blessing, but all the sorrow in the world could not fix the damage his wrong had done. Someone has to pay the price for sin. Jacob paid a price for his wrong, he had to leave the home he loved and go somewhere else to live. However God turned Jacob's bad choices out for his good. While he was living with his mother's family he married and had many children.

Additional Study Verses:

FORGIVENESS OF GOD

- ❑ Micah 7:18-19
- ❑ Psalm 86:5

Chapter 12 Joseph is Sold Into Slavery (Genesis 37, 39-42)

The Lord blessed Jacob with a very large family. His young son Joseph was his favorite. Jacob bought special gifts for Joseph. One gift was a beautiful woven coat of many different colors. Soon Joseph's older brothers became so envious of their younger brother that they hated Joseph and could not speak a kind word to him. When Joseph was about 17 years old, he began to dream dreams. In one of his dreams, he and his brothers were working in a field gathering bundles of wheat. To Joseph's amazement, his brother's



bundles of wheat came alive and bowed to his bundle of wheat. He told his dream to his brothers and they understood it to mean that their little brother Joseph would someday be the leader of the family. They became upset and began to talk about "getting rid of this dreamer".

Not long afterward, the 10 older brothers were far from home taking care of the family flocks and herds. Jacob was concerned about his sons and sent Joseph to check on their well-being (Gen. 37:13-14). The brothers saw Joseph coming in the distance and they began to plot against him (Gen. 37:18-20). They wanted to kill him, but God had other plans for Joseph. They threw Joseph into a pit while they decided what to do with him. Finally a caravan traveling to Egypt came past and they sold Joseph to them as a slave. They killed one of the animals and spilled its blood on Joseph's beautiful coat (Gen. 37:31-32). Then they took it home to their father as proof that a wild animal had killed Joseph. It looked as though Joseph's dream was not going to happen. After being sold as a slave he was wrongly accused by his master's wife and was thrown in to an Egyptian prison. Although many unfair things happened to Joseph, God was with Joseph and He blessed everything he did (Acts 7:9-10). Years later, Joseph's ability to interpret dreams was brought to Pharaoh's attention and he was promoted to be second in command over all of Egypt. God eventually brought Joseph's brothers to Egypt looking for food during a famine and they bowed



before an Egyptian prince only to discover he was their brother Joseph who they had sold into slavery many years before. God had worked in Joseph's heart and he forgave his brothers for all the wrong they had done to him.

Joseph's family, including his father moved to Egypt to live with Joseph. Jacob spent his last years in the company of his beloved son, Joseph. God took the wrong and evil that the brothers did to Joseph and turned it out for Joseph and his family's good (Gen. 45:5-8). They had plenty to eat during the famine because God showed Joseph how to prepare for the famine. Each of Jacob's twelve sons became the leader of a tribe in the family. God had changed Jacob's name to Israel years before. Israel means, "Prince with God". The nation that God had promised Abraham was finally formed. They were called the "12 Tribes of Israel".

Additional Study Verses:

FORGIVENESS

- ❑ Luke 17:3-4
- ❑ Ephesians 4:32
- ❑ Colossians 3:12-13

Unit 5 God's People in Egypt

Chapter 13 God Cares for His People in Egypt (Exodus 1; 2:1-10)



In Egypt, Jacob's children, (now called Hebrews by the Egyptians), prospered beyond what was natural. It seemed as though everything they did was a great success. God had indeed kept His promise to Abraham and had blessed his family greatly. They grew in number until one day a new Egyptian king, who did not know Joseph, became envious and suspicious of God's people. He began a campaign against them until the rest of Egypt agreed that they were not to be

trusted. They enslaved God's people and took all of their wealth. Just as God had told Abraham many years before they were now slaves (Gen. 15:13). They were forced to serve hard, but God strengthened them and they prospered and still grew in number (Exodus 1:11,12). This really frightened the Egyptians because they were afraid the slaves would rebel and take over Egypt. The king ordered that every baby boy born to a Hebrew woman be thrown into the Nile River!

About this time a Hebrew woman gave birth to a beautiful baby, she and her husband hid the little boy from the Egyptian officials.

Soon it became impossible to hide him, so his mother handed him over to God's care and made a little ark so that she could hide him in the bulrushes of the river. (Bulrushes are tall grasses that grow along the edge of a river). As his sister watched him, the current caught his little boat and took him directly into the section of river that the royal family used for bathing. His floating basket caught the attention of the king's daughter and she ordered it be brought to her. Immediately she



fell in love with the little boy and called him Moses. She made him her son. Moses' sister ran to where the Princess was and told her that she knew of a nurse for the baby. The

princess gave Moses to his mother to raise him for her. Now Moses' family could keep him without worrying if the Egyptians would throw him into the river to drown. God had not forgotten His people. He was at work preparing a leader to deliver His people from the slavery of Egypt and to bring them back to the land He had promised to Abraham over 350 years earlier.

Additional Study Verses:

SLAVERY

- ❑ John 8:34-36
- ❑ Roman 6:14-18
- ❑ Romans 8:2
- ❑ Galatians 5:1

Chapter 14 God Sends a Deliverer (Exodus 2:11-25; Exodus 3)

Like most of us, Moses tried to do what God laid on his heart without depending on God's guidance and power. As he grew up in Pharaoh's house, he became more aware of the troubles of his Hebrew brothers. One day he became so angry when he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave, he killed the Egyptian. Afraid that someone would find out, he hid the body in the sand and hoped that no one would find out (Exodus 2:11,12). However, someone did see what Moses had done and told Pharaoh all about it. Moses was no longer welcome in Pharaoh's family or kingdom. His life was now in danger so he fled from Egypt and settled in the land of Midian. There he married one of the daughters of Jethro, the priest of Midian (Exodus 2:21). He became a shepherd and for 40 dull years, he took care of sheep.

It seemed as though Moses lost all of his self-confidence. His obvious failure to help his people probably weighed heavy on his heart. He had a lot of time to reflect and I'm sure he felt like he had ruined everything. Sometimes we feel like that too, as we remember our past mistakes we are convinced that God will not be able to ever use us again. However, this is not true. Yes, we can make messes out of our lives and opportunities, but God is always ready to forgive. God never gives up on us. He continues to work in our hearts until we quit trusting in ourselves and look to Him alone for all we need.



After 40 years of watching over flocks of sheep and goats, God got Moses' attention. Off in the distance, Moses saw a burning bush. Moses was fascinated. It glowed brightly, yet it never burned up. He made his way to the bush to see it better. When he arrived, a voice called to him out of the bush and told him to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground and was in the presence of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Then God explained to Moses that He had chosen him to deliver the children of Israel from slavery. This time Moses had no confidence in himself. He listed many excuses why he could not do it. God revealed Himself to Moses in such a way and made promises to him that finally Moses was convinced he could trust God. Moses trusted God to do through him what he could not do himself.

Moses was not the Deliverer that God promised to send to save us from our sins, but he was a deliverer of the family of Jacob from the cruel slavery of the Egyptians. Moses was a picture of the Redeemer who would someday come. God was building a nation that He called Israel. The nation of Israel would be the nation that the Deliverer would come into the world through.

Additional Study Verses:

SELF-CONFIDENCE

- ❑ 2 Corinthians 1:8-10
- ❑ Jeremiah 17:5-8

GOD-CONFIDENCE

- ❑ 1 John 2:28
- ❑ Hebrews 4:14-16

Chapter 15 God Delivers His People (Exodus 4:27-Exodus 12)



Soon after God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, Moses' brother Aaron arrived from Egypt (Ex. 4:27). Together they traveled back to Egypt. All of those who wanted to kill Moses 40 years earlier had died (Ex. 4:19). The man who was now Pharaoh (king) did not know Moses nor did he know the God of Israel. The message that God gave Moses for Pharaoh was brief and to the point, "Let My people go". However Pharaoh was unwilling to let go of such a great work force. He

refused to listen to Moses and Aaron even though Moses performed signs and wonders to prove that he was telling the truth. Moses told Aaron to throw down his staff and it turned into a serpent. Pharaoh's magicians turned their staffs into serpents also, but Aaron's serpent swallowed the magician's serpents. Then Moses reached out and picked it up by the tail and it turned back into a staff in his hand. Pharaoh angrily told Moses to leave. Then he punished the children of Israel by making them work harder (Ex. 5:6-8).

Each time Moses went to Pharaoh and he refused to let God's people go, a plague came on the Egyptians. Each plague was worse than the previous one. The river and wells turned into blood, frogs and lice crawled all over the place. One time, fire and hailstorm destroyed everything that was outside in the fields. The only place it was safe was where the children of Israel lived. At times Pharaoh would promise to let the people go. However afterward he changed his mind and refused to keep his promise. The Egyptians experienced nine terrible plagues, still Pharaoh would not let God's people go.

Finally, the tenth plague was released on Egypt. The firstborn from every family would die in a single night. This time even the Hebrews were not safe from the destroying angel that would pass over to defend God's honor.

God provided Moses with instructions on



how to be safe from the death angel. Each family was to take a spotless lamb and put it to death. Its blood was to be caught in a bowl and painted the doorposts and lintel of the house (Ex. 12:21-23). Only those who believed and applied the blood would be safe. Every Hebrew family believed God and followed His instructions to the letter. That night, they stood and waited for God's salvation. They packed their belongings and were dressed to make a quick departure. As the cries of terror rose up over all of Egypt, they stood ready to leave at a moment's notice as they ate the Passover meal. Whenever the death angel saw the blood on the doorposts and lintel, he "passed over" that house and the occupants were safe. By morning, Pharaoh sent word for them to leave immediately. The Egyptians were so glad to get rid of the Hebrews they gave them silver, gold and beautiful garments (Ex. 12:35-36). The Hebrews left Egypt with much wealth. God had certainly delivered them with a powerful hand! The Bible says that Jesus is our Passover lamb, because of His death on the cross and resurrection we too can be safe from the judgment of God if we will only believe (1 Cor. 5:7).

Additional Study Verses:

HARD HEARTEDNESS

- ❑ Hebrews 3:8-15
- ❑ 1 John 3:17

REDEMPTION THROUGH THE BLOOD

- ❑ 1 John 1:7
- ❑ Revelation 1:5

Unit 6 God Leads His People

Chapter 16 God Destroys the Egyptian Army (Exodus 14)

Pharaoh was not a man of his word. No sooner were the Hebrews gone from Egypt he changed his mind (Ex. 14:5-6). No doubt, he had convinced himself that all the plagues and deaths had logical explanations. So he called for his chariots and warriors and he set off in search of them. Stubbornly Pharaoh and his army made their way toward the Hebrews. He couldn't believe his luck, there trapped by the Red Sea were his slaves! How stupid they appeared to the Egyptians. Little did the Egyptians know that God had purposely led His people to this place, so that He could once and for all deal with Pharaoh and his armies.

The children of Israel were terrified. They soon forgot all that God had done for them the day before. They began to panic and blame Moses for their situation. However, Moses was not taken by surprise. God had already warned Moses that Pharaoh would change his mind and would pursue the people (Ex. 14:1-4). Moses stood before the people and said, "Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord...the LORD shall fight for you!" (See Ex. 14:13,14). Then Moses turned and looked at the sea. As Moses raised his staff over the water, the Lord caused a strong wind to blow upon the waters (Ex. 14:21). The water parted and revealed a path through the sea. All night long, the wind blew on the path and the way became dry enough to walk on. Moses told the people to move forward and cross the sea on dry ground.



The Lord protected His people as they safely crossed the Red Sea. Then He let Pharaoh see the path through the sea and Pharaoh foolishly followed the Hebrews. God fought against Pharaoh and his armies. He caused the wheels to fall off their chariots (Ex. 14:25). From the safety of the other shore, the people of God watched as the walls of water crashed down on their enemy. All of the army of Egypt was drown that day. God's people never needed to fear the Egyptians again.

God kept His promise to Moses to be with him through it all. God promises to be with us too, if we will trust Him.

Additional Study Verses:

GOD'S PROTECTION

- ❑ Isaiah 43:1-3
- ❑ 2 Thessalonians 3:3
- ❑ Deuteronomy 1:30-31

Chapter 17 God's 10 Commandments (Exodus 20)

Finding water and food in a desert for so many people was an impossible task for Moses. As the supplies dwindled away, the people began to complain and whine to Moses (Ex. 15:22-24). Moses prayed and asked God to supply the people with whatever they needed. Immediately the Lord answered his prayer. He made water come out of a rock (Ex. 17:6) and caused bread to fall out of heaven to feed them (Ex. 16:4). God was faithful to Moses and the people although they often forgot the wonderful things He did for them and how much He loved



them. They were so ungrateful and unloving toward God they even accused God and Moses of bringing them out in the wilderness to kill them (Ex. 17:3)! Patiently, God led them through the wilderness to the place where He had first talked to Moses from the burning bush.

Once more, God is true to His Word. He promised Moses at the burning bush to be with him and to bring him and the children of Israel back to this same spot at Mt. Sinai (Horeb) and He did. The mountain smoked and quaked with the presence of God. God spoke to the nation about His law, His holy and righteous standards. No longer was God silent about what was sin and what was not. It was very clear to all. The nation of Israel, out of fear, swore allegiance to God and to His law. All that God said they promised to do. Their response was foolish, they could not promise to do something they had no power to do.



No human can perfectly keep the law of God. Since Adam and Eve sinned, every human was born with a selfish desire to please self and only self. Why did God give the law if He knew that no one could keep it? Why raise the standard even higher, if we are doomed



to fail? Keep in mind that God's entire purpose is to rescue us from sin and restore us to fellowship (friendship) with Himself. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, He was working in the lives of people to bring the Savior into the world to die to save us. The Apostle Paul in the New Testament wrote the answer to these questions. The law was never intended to give us a way to earn God's favor. Instead it is the way that God reveals to us just how

sinful and lost we really are (Romans 3:20). Just as an x-ray machine shows a doctor what is wrong with his patient, the 10 commandments shows us how wrong we are in God's eyes. The Doctor does not use the x-ray machine to fix the problem; he uses it to see what is causing the problem. No longer can we compare ourselves with others who we considered more sinful than ourselves and feel self-righteous. God invites us to compare ourselves with Him. We don't look so right after that. In fact, we look absolutely terrible! The second reason God sent the law was to point us to Jesus Christ, the only one who could ever make us right with God (Gal. 3:24).

The problem with the 10 Commandments is that although it is right and good, it has no power to help us to obey, but only threatens us with punishment if we fail to obey. Disobeying the 10 Commandments brings punishment like suffering and death to a person. Obeying it brings peace and life. Everyone wants peace and life, but they are sinners. They can't help but please themselves. The reason why there is so much pain and suffering on this earth is because men and women can not and will not obey the 10 Commandments. God's people did not obey His 10 Commandments. Over and over again, God had to let them suffer the consequences of their unbelief and disobedience. Then they would cry out to God and tell Him they were sorry for their sin. God would forgive them and bless them again. Still they never learned their lesson. They couldn't be what God asked them to be. They always failed. We, like them, will always fail too. We need rescued from our selfishness and sin. God sent His Son Jesus to do just that. Through believing that Jesus died for us and God raised Him from the dead, we can be not only forgiven, but be given a new heart that wants to trust and obey God. When we put our trust in the Lord Jesus, God promises to write His law on our heart so that we will want to obey Him (Jer. 31:33).

Additional Study Verses:

LAW (defined)

- ❑ Matthew 5:17-18
- ❑ Matthew 7:12
- ❑ Galatians 5:14
- ❑ Galatians 6:2

MAN'S INABILITY TO KEEP GOD'S LAW

- ❑ Romans 8:3-4
- ❑ Galatians 2:16
- ❑ Galatians 2:20-21

Chapter 18 Israel Fails to Trust God (Numbers 13-14)

Finally, the day came that the Lord told Moses to leave Mt. Sinai. The Lord led the nation to the very border of the Promised Land. Moses chose 12 men, (1 man from each tribe) and sent them to spy out the land. After 40 days, the men returned and reported to Moses what they had discovered. Everyone eagerly gathered around to hear the report. They were amazed to see the produce that they brought back. (One cluster of grapes was so large it took two men to carry it on a pole slung between their shoulders! See Numbers 13:24.) As the people quieted down, ten of the spies began to speak to Moses, they said, "We came unto the land where you sent us, and surely it flows with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. However the people are very strong that live there, and the cities are fortified, and besides that we saw the children of Anak (Giants) there! (See Numbers 13:27,28).

The people were terrified! Caleb, one of the two spies who trusted God, stepped



forward to calm the people. When the people quieted down, he said, "Let us go up at once, and take possession of the land; for we are more than able to do it."

The 10 spies who were afraid and didn't trust God, spoke up again, they said, "We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we are. The people are giants and we look like grasshoppers in comparison!"

That did it! All the people of Israel moaned when they heard that. All night long they cried and complained. The next day their fear turned into anger. They were furious with Moses and Aaron. They decided to pick new leaders and to return to Egypt. Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before God and prayed for the people. Caleb and Joshua, the two spies who trusted God, tried to convince the people that they had nothing to fear because God was with them to help them. The people picked up stones and were about to stone them when the glory of the Lord's presence could be seen in the outer court of the tabernacle. (The tabernacle was the portable worship center that God had instructed Moses to build.) God spoke to Moses from the cloud. God told Moses that because of the people's unbelief they were all going to die. Moses began to pray for the people. He reminded God of His promises and argued that God

was a God of mercy and forgiveness. Moses stood between God's wrath and the people. God forgave the people; but He still judged those who had caused the problem in the first place. That day all of the unbelieving spies died. God told the people that because they did not believe Him they would not be able to enter the Promised Land. Instead, they would wander in the wilderness until the last grown up who refused to believe that God could take them in to the Promised Land died. God made a promise that He would bring their children into the land instead. God praised Caleb and Joshua's faith in Him. He promised them that they alone, out of all the adults would live to enter the land some forty years later.

The only thing that kept the people from entering the Promised Land was not the giants or the great-fortified cities, but their lack of faith in God. They failed to come to know the God that loved them enough to deliver them from slavery and then bring them to a land of plenty where they could live in peace and worship Him as the one true God. Their opinion of God and His appointed leaders was very low. They saw God as demanding and they were so suspicious of Him that they accused Him of bringing them out of Egypt to kill them. Although they were sorry they didn't trust God, they were not allowed to go into the Promised Land. The next morning some of the men tried to enter anyway, but were attacked by the Amalekites (one of the fierce tribes of people living in the Promised Land) and were killed. Moses had tried to stop them, telling them that God was not with them, but they wouldn't listen.

Caleb and Joshua lived to see the land of Israel become a reality. God kept His promise to them and the land that they had spied out 40 years earlier became their special possession. All that God asked for was for His people to trust Him enough to do what He asked of them. He would take care of them and protect them. That is all that He asks of us today. Are you like Caleb and Joshua or are you more like one of those who refused to believe?

Additional Study Verses:

TRUST

- ❑ 2 Corinthians 1:9-10
- ❑ Psalm 37:1-8
- ❑ Proverbs 2:5-6

Chapter 19 God Fulfills His Promise (Deuteronomy 33:1-9)

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Moses again brought the people of God to the border of the land God had promised Abraham hundreds of years before. Moses walked alone up Mount Nebo to look out over the Jordan River to see the land that God was about to bring His people into. He was very old now, yet he was as strong as a young man. He was making this journey alone, because God had commanded him to (Deuteronomy 32:49-52). Moses knew it was a one way trip, because of his unbelief many years before, he had disqualified himself from entering the Promised Land with God's people. God had told Moses that he would die before the people crossed into the land. He was 120 years old now and was ready to move on to the next thing that God had for him, even if that meant dying. He probably looked back over his life and marveled at how faithful God had been to him although he had failed God so many times throughout his life.

The view was breathtaking! How wonderful God was to his people; they certainly did not deserve His mercy. The only thing they did well over the past 40 years was grumble and complain against Him. Still God's promise to Abraham was going to soon be fulfilled. Moses could hardly bear the excitement of what He knew was about to happen. Abraham's many great, great, great...grandchildren will become a mighty nation here on this piece of fertile land. Someday, many hundred of years after Moses is gone, God will fulfill His greatest promise yet. His only Son, Jesus, will be born in the small village of Bethlehem. He will grow up and become a man. He will walk through out the whole land bringing God's good news of salvation and healing to the people of the world. After three years He will be killed on a Roman cross not for His sins (because He has no sin in Him), but for our sin (Isaiah 53:4,5). His body will be buried in a tomb. Three days later, He will rise from the dead. Forty days later He will go up to heaven in a cloud, where He will rule forever with those who will simply trust in Him and His Word.

Moses died and the Bible tells us that God, Himself, buried him. The children of Israel cried for many days when they realized that Moses was gone for good. The people that refused to trust God the first time Moses brought them to the Promised Land had died wandering in the wilderness. Their children were now grown up and had children of their own. They were ready to trust God and follow Joshua into the Promised Land. Caleb was 80 years old, but was just as strong as when he was sent to spy out the land forty years earlier. Through depending on God for direction and strength, Joshua and Caleb led the people into the land victoriously. God can never be defeated. Whatever He says happens.



What a fantastic and awesome God we have! We can fully trust Him to keep His promises to us.

Additional Study Verses:

VICTORY

- ❑ Acts 2:29-36 (by resurrection)
- ❑ I Corinthians 15:56-58 (through Christ)
- ❑ Galatians 16-25 (victory over the flesh)

Chapter 20 God Prepares to Come and Save Us

God built a great nation out of Abraham's children. He gave them Kings that ruled over the nation and sent men called prophets to remind the people of who they were: God's Chosen People. Sadly they kept forgetting how good and great God was. They wanted to have fancy idols (images of false gods made out of stone or wood) to worship just like their ungodly neighbors. Because they could not see or hear God, they found it easy to not believe He was real. God had blessed His people with wealth and safety in the Promised Land. However they fooled themselves into believing it was their own cleverness and hard work that produced their success.



God sent prophets to warn them that if they didn't repent (change their minds) about their sin, judgment would come on them. Sometimes they paid attention to the prophet and asked God to forgive them and God would spare them from the punishment their sin earned. However most of the time they refused to believe the prophet and sometimes even killed the prophet that warned them. When they stubbornly refused to believe God, God would let them suffer the consequences. God did not want to punish them, but they were so willful they would not stop their terrible worship of false gods until trouble came to them and they realized their sin.

During all of this time, these men called prophets wrote down everything that God revealed to them. God gave them special knowledge about the future called "prophecies". The special knowledge was mostly about the Savior-Messiah who was to come and save us from our sins. Who would not just suffer the punishment we deserve for our sins, but Who will wash us clean from the inside out and change our hearts so that we will not want to sin anymore! No matter how hard people try, we can not stop sinning. We are just like God's people the Jews, we try to do the right thing, but in time, we give in to the selfishness of sin in our hearts. Our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked, says Jeremiah the prophet (Jer. 17:9). We are unable to cure ourselves of this deadly sickness called sin. How much God still loves us even when we sin against Him. He has promised to give us a new heart and spirit that will trust and obey Him if we will only believe He will do as He has promised (Ezek. 11:19-20).

Death is the punishment for sin. All who sin will die. Only a sinless person could pay

the punishment our sin has earned and set us free. The problem is that every human born since Adam, was born with a sinful heart (Romans 5:12). Only God could come and save us from the mess our sin has made. The Savior who was to come was a very special baby. Since God can not die, He had to take on a body so that He could die in our place and destroy the devil (Heb. 2:14). It was decided before Adam and Eve even sinned that God, the Son, Himself would come into the world and rescue us (Rev. 13:8). The remainder of our lessons will focus on Him and what His coming means to us.

Additional Study Verses:

JESUS, OUR SAVIOR (characteristics of:)

- ❑ Acts 4:10-12 (One and only)
- ❑ Colossians 2:9-10 (Complete)
- ❑ Jude 24-25 (Powerful)

Unit 7 The Savior Comes!

Chapter 21 Jesus is Born (Luke 1:26-35; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-20)

Joseph was deeply troubled; his wife-to-be, Mary was going to have a baby. He knew he wasn't the father. He really cared for Mary, but her story about an angel telling her that she would give birth to the Messiah was more than he could stand. "Why didn't she tell the truth?" he probably thought. She had always seemed like such a good girl and her faith in God seemed genuine, but still her story confused him. He knew he could not marry her now, but he did not want to cause Mary any further embarrassment and pain. Maybe he could quietly break off their engagement and she could move to another town far away from their little village of Nazareth.

Finally, he fell off into a fitful sleep. God was not about to let Joseph wreck His plan for Joseph's life. As he slept, Joseph began to dream. The dream seemed so real that Joseph



wasn't sure if he was awake or not. An angel appeared to him in the dream and told him that he was not to be afraid to wed Mary. Yes, Mary was going to have a son. Joseph was told to name the boy, Jesus, (which means God's Salvation), because He would save His people from their sins. When Joseph woke up, he immediately made Mary his wife and took her to his home in Nazareth while they waited for her baby to be born.

As the time drew close for Mary to give birth to Jesus, the Roman government decided to count the people so that they could tax them. Each man was ordered to return to the place of his birth so that he could register with the Roman government. Little did the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus know that he was doing God's will. God had promised His Prophet Micah that the Deliverer would be born in Bethlehem, not Nazareth (Micah 5:2). Caesar was only a tool used by God to bring His plan to pass.

Mary and Joseph faced hardship on their journey to Bethlehem. Joseph did his best to make the trip easier, but there was only so much he could do. He probably



worried if Mary were in pain or if she and child were being harmed by the rough donkey ride. He sighed with relief when they finally arrived late that day. "Now if I can only find somewhere to spend the night," he thought. The town was packed with travelers. All the inns were full. To make matters worse, the baby was ready to be born. Finally an innkeeper had pity on them and gave them permission to sleep with the animals in his stable. Soon cries from the new baby were heard throughout the stable.

God's Son had come! The Creator of the world lay humbly wrapped in rags. The very people He came to save cuddled him. He left His throne and glory behind. He came without fanfare; He came without a halo. He was not born in a fine palace, but in a lowly stable. Had it not been for the angels who announced His birth to the shepherds and the wise men of the east, His birth would have gone unnoticed and unappreciated by the busy world of that time.

Additional Study Verses:

WHAT GOD SAID WOULD HAPPEN TO THE DELIVERER:

Isaiah 9:7	David descendent	Matthew 1:1, 6, 17
Isaiah 7:14	Born of a virgin	Matthew 1:18
Micah 5:2	Born in Bethlehem	Matthew 2:1
Hosea 11:1	Flee into Egypt	Matthew 2:14
Isaiah 11:2	Some of His Characteristics	Luke 2:52
Isaiah 53:4-5	Suffer for others	Matthew 8:17
Psalms 41:9	Betrayed by a friend	Mark 14:10-11
Zec. 11:12-13	Sold for 30 pieces of silver	Matthew 26:14-16
Psalms 27:12	Accused by false witnesses	Mark 14: 56-57
Isaiah 50:6	Smitten and spat upon	Mark 14:65
Isaiah 53:7	Silent when accused	Mark 15:3-5
Isaiah 53:3	Rejected by Jews	Mark 15:9-14
Psalms 69:4	Hated without a cause	Luke 23:4 & John 19:6
Psalms 22:16	His hands and feet pierced	Mark 15:24
Psalms 22:18	His clothing gambled for	Mark 15:24
Isaiah 53:12	Die with the wicked	Mark 15:27
Psalms 22:6-8	Mocked and insulted	Mark 15:29-32
Isaiah 53:9	Buried with the rich	Mark 15:43-46
Psalms 16:10	Rise again	Luke 24:6
Psalms 68:18	Go back to heaven	Acts 1:9

Chapter 22 Jesus' Baptism (Matthew 3:1-17)



Before Jesus' public ministry, there was a man "sent from God" to prepare the hearts of people. John wore clothing made from rough camel's hair; he ate a diet of locusts and wild honey. He was certainly someone that people noticed. His message was simple, but powerful. "Repent! For the kingdom of God is at hand!" To a first century Jew this meant, "People, get ready, God is coming!" John was the fulfillment of a familiar but ancient prophecy from

Isaiah 40:3. He was "the voice crying in the wilderness" for men to prepare their hearts for God. The prophet Malachi described him as someone like Elijah the prophet who lived hundreds of years earlier (Mal.4:6) Elijah also wore camel's hair garments and was very bold in his ministry against evil. The people were convinced that he was the prophet that God had promised. There was much excitement as people gathered to hear John speak. John baptized many people after they believed and repented of their sins. (To baptize means to dip a person completely under water; it is a picture of burying the old life without God and rising up out of the water to a new life with God.)

John's baptism was an opportunity to publicly show friends, relatives and neighbors that a person believed John's message of repentance and that they were sorry for their sin. John was not a coward. When the religious leaders came out to hear him preach, John exposed their insincere or phony faith. They like being looked up to by all the people as holy men that had a special relationship with God, although they did not really know God. They had no intentions of repenting; as far as they were concerned repenting was for the common every day people, but it certainly wasn't for "good, religious" people like themselves.

One day as John was preaching, he became silent and stared off into the distance. The people turned to see what had caught John's attention. Walking toward them was a young man about 30 years old. Suddenly John's voice boomed, jarring everyone to attention. "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world", he shouted (John 1:29)!

John humbly baptized the Lord Jesus and he afterward bore witness that he saw a dove come out of heaven and land on Jesus while he heard God speak from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"!

Additional Study Verses:

JOHN THE BAPTIST

- ❑ Luke 1:11-20 (Birth Announced)
- ❑ Luke 3:1-20 (Ministry)
- ❑ Matthew 13:3-12 (Death)

Chapter 23 Jesus' Temptation (Matthew 4:1-11)

Immediately after Jesus was baptized, He was led by God, the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. He fasted (to go without food and sometimes water for special times of prayer) and prayed for 40 days. When He was finished



fasting, the Bible says that He became hungry. During this moment of human weakness, the devil saw an opportunity to tempt this “perfect man”. Satan said to Jesus, “If you are really the Son of God, command these stones to become bread.” Jesus did not let His hunger or the human desire to prove He was the Son of God stir Him to act on Satan’s insinuation. Instead, He relied completely on His Heavenly Father to meet all His needs. He chose His “weapon” against the devil carefully. Using a verse from the Bible like an invisible sharp two-edged sword, He spoke it to the Tempter. “It is written, Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”! Satan winced with pain, but he did not admit defeat yet. Two more times he attacked Jesus with greater temptations. He wanted to stop Jesus from doing

the will of His Heavenly Father, which was to redeem men from their sin and destroy the devil. Each time Jesus responded by quoting another passage of scripture. Satan is a deceiver and liar, he can not stand the truth unless he can twist it until it says what he wants it to say. Remember Eve? When Satan tempted her, she didn’t use God’s words as a weapon against Satan. Because she and Adam failed to trust God’s Word, they lost all of creation (including their own selves as well as us) to Satan’s control. The devil knew that Jesus was definitely the one promised by God who would “crush his head” (Gen.3:15). The realization that this was not an ordinary man must have made his heart (if he has one) to tremble with panic and fear. Satan’s days were numbered and he was determined to do whatever he could to delay his defeat and bring suffering to this hated Challenger. Like a coward, he fled from Jesus to plan his next attack.

The Heavenly Father sent angels to minister to His beloved Son, Jesus. Jesus had brought much glory to His heavenly Father by trusting Him during this difficult test. God’s words are the most powerful weapons available to us. The enemy of our soul, Satan, hates

God's word. He will do everything he can to keep us from knowing the truth. He knows that he only has power in a person's life to the degree that they are unaware of what God says is true. Don't be foolish like Eve, but wise like the Lord Jesus; learn to depend on Him to resist temptation. This will involve prayerful study of the Word and a growing reliance on the Holy Spirit in applying truth to your situation.

Additional Study Verses:

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

- ❑ 2 Corinthians 10:3-6
- ❑ Ephesians 6:10-18
- ❑ James 4:7

Chapter 24 Jesus, the Only Way to God (John 3:1-16; Num. 21:5-9)

As Jesus' ministry grew, His popularity with the everyday people became a serious threat to the religious leaders of the Jewish people. Everything that Jesus said or did drew criticism from these men. Sometimes it seemed as though Jesus was deliberately provoking them. For example, He claimed to be the Son of God (John 10:36) and that He alone had the power to forgive men their sins (Mark 2:10). To further prove His claims, He performed many incredible feats. He made blind eyes see, lame feet to walk, and delivered many from the power of tormenting evil spirits. His obvious power could not be denied, so the religious leaders began to accuse Him of being possessed by the devil. They told the people that Jesus was empowered by Beelzebub! They were accusing Jesus of getting His power to heal and do miracles from the devil himself! (Luke 11:15).

It was very dangerous for a scribe or Pharisee to be sympathetic toward Jesus. He risked losing his power, position and reputation if he did. It was during this time that a Pharisee named Nicodemus began to question the reasoning of his fellow religious leaders. "How could someone do so many wonderful good things by the power of Satan? Surely only God can do such things," He thought. He watched Jesus in action and wasn't sure anymore that the religious leaders were right. He wanted to talk to Jesus alone. He wanted to ask Him questions and find out if He really was who He said He was. His friends would not understand, they probably would threaten him if he even hinted at being curious about Jesus.

That night, while everyone was at home, Nicodemus quietly left his house and made his way through the dark streets of Jerusalem to the house where Jesus was staying. Once he was there Jesus took him aside and listened to Nicodemus' questions. Nicodemus said, "Teacher, I know that you have to be from God, because no one can do the things that you do unless God be with him."

Jesus began to explain to Nicodemus why He had come. Jesus used phrases that Nicodemus had never heard before and it confused him. Jesus said, "You must be born again, Nicodemus".

"How on earth can I be born again?", thought Nicodemus. Surely no one can go back in time and be born all over again. Jesus wasn't talking about Nicodemus' body, He was talking about his heart. The reason why Nicodemus could not understand Jesus'



message was because he was spiritually dead and unable to understand it although he wanted to.

Jesus questioned Nicodemus' claim to be a teacher of the law. He asked, "Nicodemus, why can't you understand what I'm saying?" Nicodemus had no answer for that, he only knew that unless he grasped what Jesus was saying, he would be lost forever. He struggled to understand, but he couldn't.

Nicodemus' confusion was obvious, so Jesus changed His way of teaching and began to speak as plainly as He could to him. He began to teach him how he could be born again and have a new life. "Nicodemus, God loved the people of the world so much that He gave His one and only Son to the world. And who ever will believe this and trust in God's Son will never perish but will live forever with God." Jesus gently taught Nicodemus that Jesus would be lifted up as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness. (Because of the people's sin, poisonous snakes had invaded the Israelite's camp and were biting the people. God told Moses to make a serpent out of bronze and lift it up high on a pole so that anyone who would believed and look would be healed of the snakebite. Moses told the people (who were bitten by the fiery serpents) to look at the brass serpent and they would not die. Those who believed and did that simple act of looking up were immediately saved from the poisonous bite. See Numbers 21:5-9.) Nicodemus knew exactly what Jesus was saying. In those days the Roman government lifted up criminals on wooden crosses to die slow deaths for their crimes.

"The serpent of sin" has bitten us all and its poison will forever separate us from God if someone does not rescue us. Something as simple as one look to Jesus in faith can wash us clean from all sin and give us new life in Him. Won't you trust Him today?

Additional Study Verses:

SALVATION

- ❑ Romans 5:12
- ❑ Romans 3:23
- ❑ Romans 6:23
- ❑ Romans 5:8
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 15:1-4
- ❑ John 3:16-17
- ❑ 1 John 5:11-13

Chapter 25 Who is Jesus to You? (Mk. 8:27-33; Mt. 16:16; Lk. 9:28-35)

“Who do men say that I am?” Jesus asked His disciples (Mark 8:27). They answered, “John the Baptist (who King Herod had killed), some say Elijah, the prophet, and others say you are one of the prophets. ”Then Jesus asked, “And who do you say that I am?” Peter quickly replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matt. 16:16). Everyone who has ever heard of Jesus has an opinion of Him. Some say that He was a good man who taught commendable, but unrealistic ideals, some say He was a nice guy that was a victim of the cruel Roman government. A few are not so nice. They confess He was a misguided Jew who turned the Roman government against Him leading to His death. Many, like Peter say that He was exactly who He said He was, the Savior of the world, God’s own Son. What is your opinion of Jesus? Your entire future depends on your answer to this question. Failure to decide is no excuse. Failure to believe that He is who the scriptures reveal Him to be is as much a choice of death as an all out rejection of Him. Suppose you are invited to go on an all-expense paid vacation to Disney World with a friend. Your friend calls and says, “We are leaving promptly at 2:00 PM tomorrow for the airport. If you want to go, be ready to leave at that time from my home. You must actively participate in the decision to go. If you don’t take your friend seriously you will not be ready, and if you don’t make a choice to go, you won’t.

Sadly, many people who know the truth about Jesus are missing the blessing of a relationship with God through failing to take God seriously. Simply failing to make up one’s mind to believe the good news about Jesus will cause a person to miss a relationship with God. Before you finish reading this, it is my desire that you ask yourself this question and then honestly answer it: **Who do I say that Jesus is?** Now let’s learn what God’s opinion is of Jesus.



About a week later, Jesus took Peter, James and John (3 of His 12 disciples) up on a mountain to pray with Him. While Jesus was praying something incredible happened; right before their eyes, Jesus’ face and clothing began to glow with a bright light. Then Moses and Elijah appeared and began to speak to Jesus. The three disciples were dumbfounded for a moment as they listened to Jesus talk with Moses and Elijah about His soon coming death in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31).

Peter, the most impulsive of the disciples, interrupted the conversation between Jesus, Moses and Elijah and said, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make tabernacles for each of you”. Although it was only a week earlier that Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ the Son of the Living God, he was now confused and apparently was putting Jesus on the same level as Moses and Elijah. Immediately a cloud materialized and engulfed the disciples. They were terrified as they heard the voice of God speak to them. “This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him!”

As the disciples watched, Moses and Elijah disappeared and they only saw Jesus standing before them. It was as if God was setting the record straight, Jesus was not just another prophet or an angel sent with a message from God, He was God, the Son who would die for the sins of mankind and deliver all who would believe in Him from the guilt and power of their sins. “Listen to My Son”, God commands us. Only Jesus has the authority to save us. If we try to come to God any other way, or through any other person (even our parents) we will be lost. As great as Moses and Elijah are they can’t save us, only Jesus can. Some people trust in good deeds or in being a member of a church, but even these can not give us the relationship we need to have with God. Again I ask, **“Who is Jesus to you?”**

Additional Study Verses:

NAMES OF CHRIST IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- ❑ Matthew 1:23
- ❑ Mark 1:24
- ❑ Luke 1:76; 9:20
- ❑ John 1:9, 29; 5:27; 6:35; 8:12; 10:14; 11:25; 15:1
- ❑ Romans 11:26
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 10:4; 15:45
- ❑ Ephesians 2:20; 5:23
- ❑ 1 Thessalonians 1:10
- ❑ 1 Timothy 2:5
- ❑ Hebrews 4:14; 6:20
- ❑ James 4:12
- ❑ 1 Peter 5:4
- ❑ 2 Peter 2:20
- ❑ 1 John 1:1; 5:20
- ❑ Revelations 1:5; 13:8; 22:16

Chapter 26 Jesus' Power Over Death (Luke 10:38-42; John 11)

In the village of Bethany, there was a family of two sisters and one brother who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. Martha, Mary and Lazarus always opened their home to Jesus and His disciples whenever their travels brought them to Bethany. This small family loved Jesus very much. As Martha fixed dinner, Lazarus and Mary would listen to Jesus talk. Jesus appreciated their kindness toward Him and probably felt as though He was in His own home while He was there.

In Jewish culture, women were not allowed to participate in Bible classes with men, but Jesus ignored this tradition. He allowed Mary to sit at His feet and learn right along with the men (Luke 10:39). Because of His willingness to include all who wanted to be discipled, Mary appreciated this rare opportunity and made good use of it. She listened carefully to every word He spoke and believed what He said about His soon coming death and resurrection although the rest of the disciples did not.

While Jesus was teaching and healing the people that came to Him near the Jordan River, Lazarus became very sick at home in Bethany. Mary and Martha tried everything they knew of to help their brother, but he only grew worse. He became so ill that they were afraid that he would die. They sent a message to Jesus asking Him to come home immediately.

When Jesus heard that Lazarus was sick He made no effort to go to Bethany. In fact, He waited 2 days before He told the disciples that they were going to Bethany. (By this time, Lazarus had died.) This frightened the disciples because they knew that the Jewish leaders were looking for a reason to have Jesus put to death. Jesus explained that Lazarus was asleep and He must go and wake him. "If Lazarus is only sleeping, he will recover", they argued with Jesus. They did not understand that Lazarus had died and Jesus was speaking of raising him from the dead. Jesus bluntly told them that their friend had died. Jesus was glad that He was not present when Lazarus, became sick, because His disciple's faith in Him was still weak. Although they believed He could heal the sick and cast out devils, they had a hard time believing anyone could raise someone from the dead especially after they were dead several days.

As Jesus entered the small village of Bethany, Martha ran out to meet Him. "Master if You had only been here, my brother would not have died," she scolded Him. "I know that even now, if You would ask God, He will grant you your request", she said.

Jesus calmly said, "Your brother will rise from the dead". Martha knew that Lazarus would rise from the dead "someday", but she wasn't so sure about "right now". Jesus explained that **He** was the Resurrection and the Life. The resurrection was not just an unknown date on God's calendar. Jesus alone has the keys of death (Rev. 1:18). This means that even death must obey Him!

“Martha, Do you believe this?” asked the Lord.

“Yes, Lord, I believe”, replied Martha. Martha ran back to the house and called for Mary to come. They followed Jesus to Lazarus’ tomb. Jesus was overwhelmed by the grief of His friends and probably the smallness of their faith in Him and the Bible simply says, “Jesus wept”. Everyone gathered around to watch this powerful, strong man weep at the grave of His friend. They whispered to each other and discussed His apparent inability to stop this tragedy from happening. Suddenly Jesus spoke; He ordered that the stone be rolled away from Lazarus’ tomb.

Despite Martha’s protests that Lazarus’ body was decaying and would stink by now, the stone was rolled away. Looking up, Jesus prayed, “Thank You Father for always hearing and answering my prayers. I know that You always hear Me, but I have said this so that those who are listening will believe.” Then He spoke in a loud voice and said, “Lazarus, Come forth”! To the awe and amazement of everyone there, Lazarus stumbled out of the



cave wrapped in His grave clothes. Jesus turned to the bewildered crowd and said, “Loose him and set him free”! Many of the people believed in Jesus that day, but there were some who ran to the enemies of Jesus and told them what they had seen. The High Priest and Jewish leaders became so envious that they began to seek a way to be rid of Jesus forever. (Or so they thought.)

Additional Study Verses:

JESUS vs DEATH

- ❑ Hebrews 2:9-15
- ❑ Revelation 1:18

Chapter 27 King Jesus (John 12:1-19)



Six days before the Feast of Passover (a holiday that celebrates God's deliverance of Israel from the slavery of Egypt), Jesus returned to Bethany to visit his friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. While Mary was preparing to serve supper, Jesus and his disciples reclined at the table talking. Mary came into the room and knelt before Jesus. She opened a bottle of extremely precious and costly perfume and poured it on Jesus' feet. She began to wipe his feet dry with her hair.

Tears streamed down her face as she thought of Jesus' words, that He spoke many times warning them of His coming death. She wanted Him to know how much He meant to her and her family. Judas, one of the disciples, became irritated by Mary's actions. He scolded her for her "wastefulness". He told her that she should have sold the perfume to help the poor. John tells us in John 12:6 that Judas was a thief and he wanted to pocket some of the proceeds from the sale of the perfume. In Matthew 26:12,13, Jesus said that Mary poured the perfume on Him because she believed He was going to die soon. Jesus praised Mary for her act of kindness and love toward Him.

The next day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey. Word spread like wildfire that Jesus was approaching the city riding on the foal of a donkey. Everyone knew what this meant. Their promised Messiah-King had come! Hundreds of years earlier the Prophet Zechariah wrote to Israel these words from God: "Do not fear, O daughter of Zion, Behold, your King is coming, sitting on the colt of a donkey!" (Zech. 9:9).

The people were thrilled; hundreds of people filled the streets waving palm branches and casting their cloaks in front of Jesus. "Hosanna!", they cried, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" They rejoiced and sang all the way to the temple. Not everyone was happy with Jesus' claim to be the Promised One. The Jewish leaders were furious. They hated Jesus' popularity. It frightened them to think that they were losing control of the people. Something had to be done to stop Jesus. Even Lazarus was in trouble with the religious leaders because many believed in Jesus after Lazarus' resurrection. They decided to kill Lazarus also. (John 12:9-11)

Within a few days, they hatched up a plan to get rid of Jesus. They found a traitor in Jesus' circle of friends that loved money more than Jesus to help them pull it off. Because of

Jesus' popularity with the people, they had to do it secretly and privately. They needed time to convince the people that Jesus was not who they thought He was. They looked for evil men who they could pay to lie about Jesus to the people and the Roman government.

Additional Study Verses:

ENVY

- ❑ Proverbs 14:30
- ❑ Ezekiel 35:11
- ❑ Acts 13:45
- ❑ Romans 13:13-14
- ❑ 1 Corinthians 13:4
- ❑ James 3:14-16
- ❑ 1 Peter 2:1

Chapter 28 The Last Supper and Arrest of Jesus (Mark 14; John 18:2-10, 16-27)



Before the Passover Feast, Jesus knowing that His time was very short, gathered His disciples together in an upper room to share one last meal with Him. One of these men, Judas, was lost in thought. He had decided that there was money to be made by betraying Jesus to the Chief Priest and religious leaders. John says that Satan had put the idea in his heart (John 13:2).

Jesus took the bread on the table, blessed it, broke off pieces of it, and handed them to His disciples. Then He shared his wine with them. He explained that the bread and wine represented His body broken for them and His blood spilled for them. He then commanded them to remember His death and often meet with each other to share the Lord's Supper until He comes back. After Jesus shared His bread with Judas, Judas got up and left the room. He went out into the dark night to find the religious leaders (John 13:30).

After Judas left to inform on the Lord Jesus to the Chief Priests and Scribes, Jesus and the remaining disciples finished their meal and then went out to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Jesus had done His best to prepare his friends for what was about to happen, but they still did not understand. He had warned Peter that Peter would deny even knowing Jesus before the rooster crowed to signal the next day. Peter could not imagine ever being disloyal to the Lord Jesus. He loved Jesus. He was sure he would never do that (Mk. 14:30-31). Then Jesus prayed a very special prayer for His disciples and for all who would someday believe in Him (John 17).

When they arrived at the garden, Jesus' heart was heavy with the knowledge of what was about to happen. This is why He had come into the world, to suffer and die so that men, women, boys and girls could be saved from the terrible guilt, power and punishment of their sins. The worse was yet to come for Jesus. He knew that when He was put to death, all the sins that you and I (and every person who has ever lived) have ever committed or will commit was going to be put on Him. Then while Jesus was being judged and punished for what we have done wrong, His Heavenly Father could



not bear to look at Him and Jesus suffered alone. He asked His disciples to pray with Him. As Jesus prayed, the disciples fell asleep. Jesus was saddened by their lack of concern for Him, yet He loved them so much, He was still willing to do what He had to do to save them and us. He prayed for His Father's will to be done in His life.

As He finished praying, a noisy mob made their way toward Jesus. Judas was leading the Roman soldiers and religious leaders right to Jesus! Judas who loved money more than Jesus, had told the religious leaders where to find Jesus so that they could arrest Him. They paid Judas 30 pieces of silver for his help in finding Jesus. God had told the Prophet Zechariah hundreds of years before that He would be only worth 30 pieces of silver to the religious leaders of His people. This is exactly what happened (Zech. 11:12-13). God's word is so accurate, because God is the one who wrote it. He told men to write all of these "clues" so that we could see how true His word is and put our faith in it.



It looked like Jesus was a victim, but He was not. He was God Almighty (Is. 9:6) and all of this was determined by Him to happen. He was in control, not the Roman soldiers or chief priests. When the soldiers rushed forward to take Jesus by force, Jesus said, "I AM"! The Bible says all of his enemies drew back and fell to the ground at His feet. Then He spoke again and said, "I AM! If you seek Me, then let these (*my friends*) go," (John 18:10).

During all of this, Peter suddenly drew his sword and cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant. Still the Roman soldiers had no power to take hold of Jesus and His disciples. Jesus had compassion on the man who Peter wounded and healed him. How wicked the religious leaders were, even after witnessing this miracle and the power of Jesus over the



Roman soldiers they still wanted to arrest Him. Then Jesus ordered them to let His disciples go and He allowed them to bind and arrest Him. The disciples ran away in terror and left Jesus all alone with His captors just like God's word said they would (Zech. 13:7).

Jesus was taken to the High Priest to be tried for crimes that He never committed. Evil men lied about Jesus in exchange for money. All that night Jesus' enemies questioned and

mistreated Him. Peter and John followed from a distance to see what would happen to the Lord Jesus. Just as Jesus had predicted, Peter denied even knowing Jesus when people asked him if he knew Jesus. The third time he swore he didn't know Jesus, a rooster crowed! Luke tells us that Peter could see Jesus from where he was standing and Jesus turned as the rooster crowed and looked at Peter (Lk. 22:61). Peter was heart broken that he had done this to His Lord. He ran away and wept bitterly.

The Lord Jesus suffered terribly at the hands of the Roman soldiers. They beat Him. They stripped Him, then dressed Him in a purple robe and shoved a crown of thorns on His head. Then they bowed before Him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews", and as they rose, they struck Him in the face (John 19:1-3). Isaiah prophesied that the Lord's face would be disfigured (Is.52:14). Only someone who really loves us would be willing to suffer so horribly for us. He did not have to do it. Aren't you glad He did it for you and me anyway?

Additional Study Verses:

THE LOVE OF GOD

- ❑ Romans 5:5
- ❑ Romans 8:38-39
- ❑ Titus 3:4-5
- ❑ 1 John 4:9

Outside, in the public court of the Roman Governor Pilate, Jesus stood bruised and bleeding from the beatings He had received the night before. Pilate had determined the charges against Jesus were not enough to condemn Him to death and so he decided to release Jesus (Lk. 23:4). If he figured the punishment Jesus suffered that night would be enough to satisfy the Jewish leaders, he was wrong. All the more they demanded Jesus' death. Finally they accused Pilate of being disloyal to Caesar (John 19:12). This frightened Pilate, but still he did not want to condemn an innocent man. He turned to the crowd that gathered and reminded them that since it was Passover, he would pardon a prisoner of his crimes and send him home (Mk 15:6). He hoped they would rather free Jesus than have a murderer, like Barabbas released onto their streets. He was wrong. They screamed, "Give us Barabbas!" When Pilate asked them what he should do with Jesus, they shouted, "Crucify Him!" (See Lk. 23:18-19)

"Why? What has He done," asked Pilate? This only made them shout louder to crucify Jesus. Pilate was dumbfounded. He had tried to spare Jesus, but he could not do so without losing the approval of the people. He was a little afraid of Jesus because the Jews said that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God (John 19:7-8). He called for a basin of water. The people watched silently as he dipped his hands in the clean water. (Washing one's hands publicly was a claim of innocence in those days.) Then he turned to the crowd and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood".

We don't know if Barabbas ever realized that although he deserved to be crucified, the Lord Jesus did not. Jesus never said or did a selfish thing in His whole life. He lived to love



others and please His Heavenly Father. Jesus loved Barabbas and even the Roman guards that beat and make fun of Him. Jesus loves us too although we have done bad things.

Jesus was led away to the place of execution. He was so badly beaten that he stumbled under the weight of His cross as He walked through the streets of Jerusalem. His friends and family were full of grief and sorrow as they watched the Roman soldiers nail His

hands and feet to the cross and then roughly drop His cross into the hole in the ground. His mother, Mary and the other disciples stood weeping as they watched their Lord suffer.

Jesus had told them many times that He would be put to death and that He would rise from the dead three days later, but they forgot. As Jesus hung dying on the cross, the soldiers gambled or cast lots for Jesus' clothes that they had stolen from Him the night before. (This fulfilled the prophetic words of King David from Psalm 22:16-18). The enemies of Jesus made fun of Him as He died.

As the afternoon wore on the sky suddenly grew pitch black. It stayed dark for three hours! Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "It is finished!" Then He bowed His head and dismissed His Spirit. At the same time, the curtain in the temple that hung between the Holy place and the Holy of Holies was torn from the top to the bottom (Luke 23:45). The Holy of Holies was a room in the temple where the presence of God dwelt. A thick curtain separated and protected the people from the holy presence of God. To enter God's presence meant instant death to a sinner. Only once a year the High Priest who had made a blood sacrifice of an innocent animal for his own sin and the sins of the people was permitted to come safely into God's presence. The High priest then asked God to forgive the sins of the people (Heb. 9:7). God accepted the death of His only begotten Son as full payment for our sins! When we believe this, we are welcome to come directly to God with our prayers and have no fear that He will reject us (Heb.4:16). Jesus took all our sin and gave us all His righteousness in return (2 Cor. 5:21).

At the end of the day, they lowered Jesus' lifeless body to the ground and some of His disciples placed his body in a tomb. Since it was almost sundown, they had to hurry, because the Law of Moses didn't allow them to work after sundown before a holy day. They quickly wrapped His body in strips of cloth and left for home (Lk. 23:52-56).

Additional Study Verses:

CHRIST'S SUFFERING FORETOLD

- Isaiah 53
- Psalm 22

Chapter 30 The Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord Jesus

(Matthew 27:62-Matthew 28:1-10)

The religious leaders complained to the Roman government that Jesus had promised His disciples that He would rise from the dead on the third day. They wanted an armed guard put at the tomb to prevent the disciples from stealing Jesus' body and then spreading a rumor that He had risen from the dead. An armed guard was posted and the stone over the entrance was sealed (Matt. 27:62-66).

It was a long weekend, because Passover and the Sabbath day were back to back, the disciples were unable to visit Jesus' grave until early Sunday morning. As soon as the sun began to rise, Mary Magdalene and Mary made their way to the grave. They were so sad. The memory of Jesus hanging on the cross was still very fresh in their minds. Mary Magdalene could not understand why anyone could hate Jesus so much. She was miserable until she met Jesus. She had lived a sinful life and was tormented every moment by seven demons from Satan (Mk. 16:9). However, when Jesus met her He immediately set her free from them. He had commanded them to never return, and they never did. Why did the Chief Priests and scribes hate the Lord? There was no easy answer.

As they approached the tomb, the two women began to wonder how they were going to move the heavy stone that sealed the tomb. Suddenly the ground began to shake violently. They could hardly stand up. As they clung to each other, they watched in amazement as an angel appeared. He was dressed in white and glowed like the sun on a crisp winter morning. He rolled the stone away. The Roman guards fell on the ground as though they were dead. They were terrified. The angel spoke to the women. He said, "Don't be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified, but He is not here, for He is risen! Come look where His body used to lie." They both entered the grave. It was empty!

Only the grave clothes were left behind. The angel asked them to quickly go and tell the rest of Jesus' disciples that He was alive.

The women were overwhelmed with joy. Imagine what the news was like for them. They thought that they would never see Jesus again, but now He was alive and well. They ran to tell the disciples about the wonderful news. As they went, Jesus met them. It was true what the angel said. He was alive! They fell at Jesus feet and worshipped Him. They could not contain their joy



at seeing Him alive. Jesus comforted them and then He sent them to tell the disciples that He was risen (Matt. 28:1-10).

The Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples many times over the next forty days. He carefully taught them that He wanted them to tell the world of what they had had the privilege



of seeing and hearing while they were with Him. He would soon be ascending to heaven to resume His reign at the right hand of His Father. He explained to them that they were to wait together in Jerusalem after He left because something wonderful was going to happen to them (Acts 1:4-5). God, the Holy Spirit was coming! He would live in each one of them and in every person who would believe the disciple's message about Jesus' death and resurrection. He will make us like Jesus as we daily trust God.

Remember the promise God made to give us a new heart and spirit (Ezek. 36:26)? This is the fulfillment of that promise.

On Jesus' final day with His disciples, He walked them out to the Mount of Olives. As He was giving them last minute instructions, He began to rise up from off the earth slowly until He was finally far above the clouds and they couldn't see Him anymore. They just watched in speechless wonder for a long time. Suddenly a voice broke the silence. The dumbfounded disciples turned and looked at who was speaking to them. There stood two men dressed in bright white clothing. One asked, "Why do you stand there gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which has been taken from you will come back in the same way you have seen Him go!" (See Acts 1:9-11)

Jesus is coming back to earth someday. It could be at anytime. He could come back before you finish this lesson or before you are grown up. We don't know the exact day and time. We are to live as if it could be at any moment. What if it was today? What would change about your life if you knew He was coming before bedtime?



The disciples weren't sure when, but they lived as if the Lord Jesus was coming at anytime. The promise of the Lord Jesus coming again is just as real as the promises that the prophets wrote about His first coming as a little baby.

Additional Study Verses:

CHRIST'S RETURN

- ❑ Mark 13:24-26
- ❑ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- ❑ Revelation 1:7
- ❑ Daniel 7:13-14

Unit Eight What God Wants His Child to Know...

Chapter 31 Now That You Are God's Child...

Now that you have become one of God's children through faith in Jesus Christ, you may be wondering, "How do I live like a child of God"? "Does God expect me to be good all the time and will He be angry with me or abandon me if I fail?" All of these questions and more may be going through your mind. Sometimes when people trust God for salvation, they wrongly think they have to work hard at being good to keep God's love and approval.

There was a church in the town of Galatia that thought that way. Before they believed in Christ, they had heard the Apostle Paul preach that the unrighteous deeds (sins) they had done had separated them from God. However, then he told them that God so loved them that He gave His one and only Son, Jesus to die for them (John 3:16). He told them how that God raised Jesus from the dead and that Jesus now lives forever to save them from the punishment they deserved (Heb. 7:25). They were sorry for their selfishness and sin and believed what Paul said. God forgave them and made them His children. After a while the Apostle Paul had to move to another area to tell other people about God's Good News. After He left, false teachers started to teach the Galatian church lies. They told the people things like, "Yes, God gave you "New Life" as a gift (by His Grace), but now that you are saved, you have to work hard at keeping the law of Moses to keep and live your new life". These evil teachers frightened and confused the church. The young Christians tried their best to "live the Christian life" in their own power, but their efforts were never "good" enough. They also discovered that they still had a sinful nature that wanted to be selfish and really didn't want to please God at all. They were miserable, because now it seemed like God was always angry with them. (God really wasn't angry with them, He loved them, they just wrongly thought this because of the false teaching they had heard.)



Finally, someone told Paul about all the trouble the Galatian Christians were having. Paul prayed and then wrote a letter to this baby church to correct all the lies the false teachers had taught them. Paul warned them about the lies these false teachers were spreading in the church. Then He reminded them that just like they were made God's children by faith in Jesus Christ, so by trusting God moment by moment and believing what God said to them, they would become more like Jesus. He taught them about the Holy Spirit living in them and how that it is God's

responsibility to lead His children and train them up in the faith. Their responsibility was to just trust God, and God would do the rest. What a relief this was!

Paul wrote to another church that was having similar problems these words:

*As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk (*live your life) in Him.* (Col.2:6) *comments in parenthesis added by author

The same way we have received Jesus as our Savior is the same way we live the Christian life. How did you and I become Christians? We believed the truth about God's Son, Jesus. We believed that Jesus paid the punishment our sin earned and died on the cross in our place. Then we believed that He rose from the dead. When we believed this, we were forgiven and God placed us into His very own family. We simply believed what God said about His Son Jesus. God did everything else. We did nothing, but believe God was telling us the truth when God opened our hearts to know the truth. We did not earn God's forgiveness, Jesus did. Jesus took all our sins and carried them to the cross. Then when we believed He did this for us, God gave us Jesus' righteousness (the approval He earned by always doing what His Father said) for our very own (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus paid for all our sins, not just some of them. Now that we are Christians, we are to live our lives the same way, by depending on our Heavenly Father to teach us and to make us like the Lord Jesus. Just trusting Him to do what He has promised in His Word to us. Dare to believe that God will work it all out in your life as you listen to His word and talk to Him about what He has said.

When we became believers, we were born into God's family. Being born into God's family is not like joining a club that we can leave if we don't want to belong to it anymore. As a matter of fact, club members can decide that they do not like us and vote us "out", but God's family is different, once we become His child, we will always belong to God's family. We did not make ourselves God's children. By grace (undeserved favor), God made us His children. We didn't pay to be His children nor did we earn the right by doing good deeds. We only heard the truth and we believed it. It was God who opened our heart up so we would understand and believe (Acts 16:14). God did it all. What God does is perfect and can never fail. Just as you and I did not chose our earthly family we were born into, neither do we have the power to be born into God's family. Only God can do that. King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, said this about our Heavenly Father:

"I know that whatever God does, it endures (lasts) forever; nothing can be added to it nor anything taken from it. And God does it so men will [reverently] fear Him [revere and worship Him knowing that He is]". Ecclesiastes 3:14 AMP

Aren't you glad that our relationship or "right standing" with God doesn't depend on you or me? Let us thank God for His loving heart that has had compassion on us!

Additional Study Verses:

SECURITY

- ❑ John 10:27-29
- ❑ Romans 8:1
- ❑ 1 Peter 1:5

Chapter 32 God Wants You to Know Him (Judges 6:1-24)

Knowing someone and knowing **about** someone are two different things. We may know all about someone and yet we may have never even met him or her. We can not really know someone unless that person wants us to know him or her. God wants us to know Him. God is so great and fantastic that it will take all of eternity to know Him. Because we are so limited in our ability to understand, God reveals Himself to us a little at a time in ways that we can understand. This reminds me of someone in the Bible who knew all **about** God, but really didn't know God until God introduced Himself to him. I am thinking of a teenager named Gideon. His story is in the book of Judges.

The children of Israel had a love/hate relationship with God. They forgot Him when everything was going great and even worshipped other gods. However, when their sin produced trouble they would turn from their sin and ask God to help them. God always responded to their cries for help because He loved them so much. They surely did not deserve His kindness and loving care. This is called **grace**. **Grace** is God showing favor and mercy toward those who do not deserve it.

During Gideon's time, bands of Midianites kept attacking Gideon's people, the Israelites. The people of God suffered greatly because they were worshipping false gods instead of the True God. The people became sorry they had forgotten God and began to pray. The Midianites hated the Israelites and terrorized them by destroying their crops and raiding their villages. Gideon and his family suffered much because of this. They had to hide out in caves when the Midianites were invading the land. When Gideon was growing up, he heard all about how God delivered the people of Israel from slavery and then through many miracles brought them to this land. Gideon knew all **about** God, but he really didn't know God. In fact, from what Gideon says when he first meets the Angel of the LORD it appears that he really didn't even like God.

One day, Gideon was secretly threshing some wheat to help feed his family, when the Angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, "The LORD is with you, O valiant (fearless) warrior".

Then Gideon replied, "**If** the LORD is with us why then has all this (*bad*) happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt.' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hands of Midian (*our enemy*)?" After Gideon stopped speaking, the Bible says that the LORD "looked" at Gideon. This means that God made Himself known to Gideon and saw Gideon differently than Gideon saw himself. God was real! He wasn't just some story made up by the people of Israel. Gideon was very afraid, but he listened carefully to what God had to say to him. God had heard the prayers of His people and had forgiven them again. God told

Gideon that He wanted Gideon to fight against the Midianites and deliver his people from their enemy's cruel attacks. Gideon was not sure that he could do something so brave. He explained to God that he was from a poor family and that he was the youngest in his family. He probably wanted God to pick someone else. Finally, Gideon trusted God to do it through him.

Before the Angel of the LORD left, Gideon prepared a meal for the Angel. The Angel of the LORD told him to put the food on a nearby rock. Then the Angel touched the food with his walking stick and fire suddenly burst out of the rock and burned up the food. Before Gideon could speak, the Angel vanished. At the time that the Angel of the LORD was speaking to him, Gideon did not realize that he had been in the presence of the LORD and that the LORD Himself was who was speaking to him. When he realized this, he was terrified because he had been told that if a person "saw" God they would die (Exodus 33:2). Gideon fell on his face and began to pray for God's mercy. Gideon did not know God very well yet, so he was not sure what would happen to him since he saw the Angel of the LORD.



Gideon heard the LORD say to him, "Peace to you! Don't be afraid, you shall not die!" Peace means, "be whole and safe". What a relief! Gideon was not going to die. Up until now, Gideon didn't know that God was the God of Peace, but now he did and he believed what God promised him. Because he believed God's promise, he wasn't as fearful anymore. God's peace came into his heart and began to change him from the inside out.

Gideon was not naturally brave, in fact he was very cowardly. Yet, when he met God and believed what God said to him, God changed him into a very courageous man. As we read all of Gideon's story, we find out that he was not changed all at once, but little by little and day by day as he came to know God more. Gideon went on to destroy and drive out the enemy of Israel. Because Gideon continued to trust God, the Israelites also trusted God and lived in peace for the rest of Gideon's life (Judges 8:28).

What does this mean to you and I? It means that God sees in us that which He knows He can bring about and do through us if we will only trust Him. When God "looks" at us, like He "looked" at Gideon, He sees who we are as His children. He doesn't look at all our faults and weaknesses, because He knows that as we daily come to know Him, the more we will be changed to think and behave like God. Gideon saw all the reasons why he wasn't a mighty warrior. He was too poor and too young for anyone to take him seriously. Nevertheless, God ignored all of Gideon's excuses and made Gideon into a mighty warrior who is remembered by many as one of the bravest men who ever lived. God's word says,

“we can do all things through Him who strengthens us” (Phil. 4:13) and that we are “more than conquerors through Him that loves us” (Rom. 8:37). The more we come to know God through letting Him speak to us through His Word (the Bible) and believe what He has said about Himself, we will be changed to be more and more like Him (2 Cor. 3:18). The Prophet Daniel said, “The people who know God are strong and do (heroic acts)” (Dan. 11:32)!

Additional Study Verses:

BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

- ❑ Romans 8:28-31
- ❑ 2 Corinthians 3:18
- ❑ Ephesians 1:4-6
- ❑ Ephesians 4:22-24

Chapter 33 God Wants You to Know Who You are in Christ

Have you ever ask yourself, “Who am I”? Many believers in Christ struggle with their identity. Since all believers sometimes sin, personal doubt as to whether we truly are a Christian arises when we fail to trust and obey. This problem is laid to rest once a believer comes to know and believe what God says is true of them as His child. This lesson will focus on our identity as a believer in Christ

There is a lot of confusion today concerning the importance of self-esteem. It should be understood that what the world calls self-esteem amounts to trying to bolsters one's confidence in self through personal accomplishment and/or appearance. Such a foundation for having a sense of self-worth is extremely unstable and can only lead to disappointment and grief. On the other hand when we derive our sense of worth through coming to know and embrace the identity we have in Christ, our foundation is safe and secure.

In Christ I am...

Justified (declared not guilty).....Romans 3:24; Romans 5:1

Free from condemnation..... Romans 8:1-2

Adopted as God's child..... Ephesians 1:5

Marked as belonging to God..... Ephesians 1:13

God's temple..... 1Corinthians 3:16

A member of Christ's body.....Ephesians 5:29-30

Redeemed and forgiven..... Colossians 1:14

A citizen of heaven.....Philippians 3:20

A new creation..... 2 Corinthians 5:17

One body in Christ..... Romans 12:5

Free from the law of sin and death..... Romans 8:2
Inseparable from the love of God..... Romans 8:39
A child of God..... Galatians 3:26
Blessed us with all spiritual blessings..... Ephesians 1:3
His workmanship..... Ephesians 2:10
A partaker of His promise..... Ephesians 3:6
The recipient of everlasting life..... John 5:24
Raised up to sit with Christ in glory..... Ephesians 2:6
A saint..... Ephesians 1:1
Complete in Christ..... Colossians 2:10
Born of God..... 1 John 5:18
The salt and light of the world..... Matthew 5:13-14
A branch of the true vine..... John 15:1,5
A personal witness of Christ..... Acts 1:8
A minister of reconciliation for God..... 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
God's co-worker..... 2 Corinthians 6:1
As Christ is..... 1 John 4:17
The righteousness of God 2 Corinthians 5:21
Made perfect forever Hebrews 10:14

That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. ~Philemon 1:6

Our faith comes alive and works when we know clearly and simply what is ours in Christ Jesus. Whether it is character, power, authority, rights, or position a personal understanding of these things accompanied by a personal, consistent confession (agreement) of these things causes our faith to be efficient and effectual whether it be used to witness to or serve others. A fruitless life awaits the Christian that is not aware of who they are in Christ. I want to make it clear that knowing these things is not enough if we do not come to a place of personal acknowledgement or faith in who God says we are as His children.

